1-1-1997

# The social cost of acting "extra" : dilemmas of student identity and academic success in post-colonial Papua New Guinea.

Peter Wells Demerath
*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

# THE SOCIAL COST OF ACTING "EXTRA:" DILEMMAS OF STUDENT IDENTITY AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN POST-COLONIAL PAPUA NEW GUINEA

A Dissertation Presented

By

PETER W. DEMERATH

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachussetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1997

School of Education

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PETER W. DEMERATH

Approved as to style and content by:

Gretchen B. Rossman, Chair

George E. Urch, Member

Deborah B. Gewertz, Member

Bailey W. Jackson, Dean
School of Education

To my parents

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A doctoral dissertation is a project of many years which involves the help, encouragement and guidance of many people. In this space I wish to express my gratitude to those who directly or indirectly assisted in the completion of this project.

I want to first thank the people of Pere and Lorengau who warmly welcomed my wife and me into their communities during our year of fieldwork. In Pere Karol Matawai and his family looked after us and provided vital support and guidance throughout our stay. I especially am grateful to Manuai and Michelle Matawai, Ponowan and Imong Kauyap, Pwendrilei and Nama Polum, Kiteni Matawai, Pikawas Matawai, Margaret Matawai, Naso Kanamon, and Paliau Pokiap. I also thank several other people who were enormously helpful in various aspects of our lives in the village, including Francis Cholai, Petrus Ponyalo, Kumalau Paniou, Alex Chawan, Sori Kitemong, Richard Kaluwin, Posendruan Pomat, Kisokau Kusunan, Andrea Konabe, Itong Frisu, and the "Medix." I am especially grateful to Karol Matawai, Poliap Bonyalo, Ponowan Kauyap, Manuai Matawai, Birio Frisu, Naso Kanamon, and Chokal Pombuai for patiently teaching me about Manus culture.

At Manus and Ecom High Schools I am grateful to all of the students, teachers, administrators, and staff for welcoming me into their schools and enduring the awkwardness of having an outsider in their classrooms and in their lives. I especially thank Henry Apo, Michael Kantha, Apo Ibos, Bob Ogi, Mark Saramasi, Martin Pomat, Aewai Pokut, Molean Ndritakou, Margaret Polum, Pondros Pwendrilei, James Pombuai,

Rodney Banama, Kaloi Kisapoi, Molong Jacob, Lucas Thomas, Chris Yerr, Arthur Kukun, and Kela Popi. I especially thank all of the students who participated in interviews and the questionnaire at the conclusion of the study.

There were several officials in the Manus Provincial Government who were instrumental in the facilitation of my research. I thank Stephen Pokawin, Stephen Lapan, Francis Posenau, Posolok Kilepak, and Aaron Kepo. I also express thanks to several people in Lorengau for their assistance and friendship throughout our stay there: Bill and Barb Schuitt, Sam and Margaret Berger, Antony and Elia Faa, Bernie and Betty Luck, Katiwai Pokiap and Nauna Pondros, Peter and Jenny McEwan, and Robert Vatcher.

I thank Pani Tawaiyole and Richard Guy at the National Research Institute for organizing my research affiliation and for sharing insights about education in Papua New Guinea. In addition, I am grateful to Terry Smith. I also thank the following offices for giving permission for my research: The National Department of Education, The National Research Institute (Cultural Studies and Education Research Divisions); The University of Papua New Guinea (Departments of Anthropology and Education); and the Manus Provincial Research Council.

In the United States I express deep gratitude to the professors who guided me through the fieldwork process. The dissertation benefited from the assistance, criticism, and support of Dr. Gretchen Rossman, and from Dr. Deborah Gewertz, who socialized me into Melanesian anthropology and made incomparably helpful criticisms at all stages of the research. For their scholarship and personal communication which fostered a great deal of my understanding of the anthropology of the Admiralty Islands, I am grateful to

Dr. Ted Schwartz and Dr. Ton Otto. I also thank Dr. George Urch, Dr. Harry Wolcott, Dr. Frederick Erickson, Dr. Peggy Sanday, Dr. Ruben Reina, and Dr. Frank Johnston.

I thank the following friends and relatives for their support and humor throughout the fieldwork and writing process: Catherine Newling, John Walker, Rob Wieman, Brad Becker, Mark Gerry, and, of course, my brothers, Loren and Ben. I offer warm thanks to Barbara and Fred Roll for providing the funding for the research through the Manus Project of the University of Pennsylvania and, especially, for their friendship. Finally, for the collaboration which enriched this project, her companionship and brightness of spirit, I thank my wife, Ellen Wrchota Demerath.

## ABSTRACT

**THE SOCIAL COST OF ACTING "EXTRA:" DILEMMAS OF STUDENT IDENTITY AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN POST-COLONIAL PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

MAY 1997

PETER W. DEMERATH, B.A., HAVERFORD COLLEGE

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Ed.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Gretchen B. Rossman

This dissertation describes how and why high school students in a developing country may resist educational processes intended to make them into modern citizens. The research set out to illuminate in-school processes which affected students' academic engagement and to help explicate an eight-year decline on the Grade 10 School Certificate Examination in Manus Province, Papua New Guinea. The report is based on one year of ethnographic research conducted in Pere village on the southeast coast and two high schools in Lorengau, the provincial capital, in 1994-95.

I claim that at the time of study a shift away from the village in critical economic resources, rising unemployment, the ongoing viability of the subsistence base, and a need to maintain a degree of control over those living in towns led many Pere Villagers to be discouraged about the value of educational investment and to make claims to a somewhat invented "traditionality."

In the high schools in Lorengau, students were aware of the limited opportunity structure after grade 10, and that they could return to their villages after finishing school and make their living from subsistence economics. A critical mass of students rationalized that school success, with its unlikely rewards, was not worth its requirements of hard work and conformity to rules. These students pursued social experience in school, resisted teachers, and valorized an egalitarian village-based identity within the student culture.

I argue that the ongoing construction of this identity led these students to conduct routine surveillance of their peers for signs of acting "extra:" Appropriating Western behaviors which were associated with hierarchical status positions in the cash economy, or making strident efforts in school to obtain such a position. Accordingly, I show that Manus high schools functioned as social fields for the negotiation of Melanesian personhood.

I conclude that people in Pere and Manus high schools lay claim to a moral "good" inherent in Melanesian egalitarianism, and that these were creative and rational responses which both critiqued the tendency of capitalist development to create hierarchical status differences and served to maintain these peoples' sense of worth in contexts of increasing powerlessness.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Maski [forget] Skul
School, School,
What is the school
It's only a white man's way of life
My father didn't go to school
And so my mother
So why should I go to school?

What is school
It is only a training place
You'll be told to stand at all times
You'll be busy
You won't have much freedom
You'll be hungry
So why should I go to school?
It's trying to change our ways
It's only a waste of time
Better to be at home
Enjoy fishing and hunting
Just like my parents were in the time of darkness

[Anonymous student poem; from the Ecom High School Magazine 1991-94]

In this dissertation I describe how and why high school students in a Papua New Guinean province resisted educational processes intended to make them into modern citizens. The study, based on one year of mixed-methods ethnographic research in 1994-95, was divided between Pere Village on the southeast coast, and two high schools in Lorengau, the capital of Manus Province (see maps in Appendix A). The study was divided between these sites in order to understand the relationships between the

meanings both villagers and high school students constructed about the value of formal education. I argue in this thesis that due to rising educational credentialism and unemployment, both Pere Villagers and students in Manus high schools felt in danger of being left behind by processes of modernization. I describe how, in their ongoing processes of self-definition, people in both settings lay claim to a moral "good" inherent in Melanesian egalitarianism which both critiqued the tendency of capitalist development to create hierarchical status differences and served to maintain their sense of worth in a context of increasing powerlessness.

The study intended to illuminate in-school processes which affected Papua New Guinean students' academic engagement.[1] It was also motivated in part by a request from the Assistant Secretary of Education in Manus for research into factors which could explicate a recent decline in provincial achievement on the Grade 10 School Certificate Examination. Since 1987, the Mean Rating Index (MRI) for Manus had declined from well above to below the national average[2] (see Appendix B). For the 1993 school year the Manus MRI was the second lowest in Papua New Guinea. This situation embarrassed many people in Manus, as their province had formerly been among the highest-achieving in the country. Manus education officials believed that part of their province's decline could be attributed to the educational development of other provinces,

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[1] Academic engagement is used here to describe the extent to which students are more or less occupied with formal learning in school (see Davidson, 1996).

[2] The MRI is the percentage of grade 10 students who scored Upper Passes or above in the nationally examined subjects of English, Mathamatics, Social Science, and Science. The MRI is the rating index averaged across all subjects, and a score of 50% indicates average performance for a province.

and a new "Education for All" policy which had been adopted in 1991 in accordance with World Bank, Unicef, and UNESCO reforms. However, they said that even with this more "varied" student body, the primary problem in Manus was that the "academic quality" at the schools was not very good, and that even the best students were doing worse. Thus, the Assistant Secretary for Education asked me to discern what I could about some of the causes for this decline in academic achievement during my study of student life.

The data, collected between September, 1994, and September, 1995, indicated that both Pere Villagers and Manus high school students were experiencing great ambivalence about the extent to which education could improve their lives. This response was grounded in the Manus' habitual way of thinking about education - in terms of efficacy of knowledge. I argue that the paucity of wage-earning opportunities in the cash economy and the continuing viability of subsistence economics leveled aspirations for personal wealth in Pere. In addition, Pere Villagers made claims to a partially constructed "tradition" in order to maintain their worth and to exert a degree of control over those living in town. Meanwhile, discouraged about the prospects for a return on their educational investment, they minimalized their involvement in their community school and evinced a detached attitude towards their childrens' schooling.

In the two high schools under study in Lorengau, many students regarded a grade 10 education in the context of the current opportunity structure as "worthless." In the absence of strong support from parents and consistent enforcement of rules and discipline in the schools, a critical mass of students rationalized that they would not score

well enough on the grade 10 SCE in order to get an offer to post-secondary education. These students knew they could go home to their villages where life was "easy:" They could make their living from subsistence economics and still consume imported goods and media from town. These students hoped to use their school knowledge to do something "practical" in the village - like run a trade store, or build semi-permanent houses. These students adopted a self-described "casual" attitude towards their studies in school: They curtailed their academic efforts, resisted school authorities, and privileged the pursuit of social experiences over school success. I argue that this development signalled both the developing of a new personal subjectivity in Manus youth, and a shift in what high school meant to them - it was becoming valued as much for the unique social experience it offered as for its educational and occupational utility.

Most importantly, in order to affirm their developing selves in school while knowing they would likely return to their villages, a critical mass of students lay claim to an identity grounded in their villages and a moral "good" inherent in "traditional" Melanesian egalitarianism. They exerted this claim as leverage over their peers in an effort to restrain their individualistic ambitions and to build a community of like-others in school. These students routinely policed their classmates for signs of betrayal of this identity - for acting like the "other." Behaviors which capitalist institutions ultimately transformed into "capital" such as speaking too much English, dressing like a white person, and exerting excessive effort on school work were construed as acting "extra," "fancy," "expensive," or "greedy." Students who evinced these behaviors were teased, criticized, and ostracized by their classmates. Some high-achieving students were able to

adopt behaviors and form syncretic identities through which they could preserve their academic efforts and their aspirations for work in the cash economy. Many others, however, fell prey to the pressures of the anti-academic student culture, curtailed their academic efforts, resisted teachers, and initiated use of alcohol and marijuana.

Throughout this dissertation, I argue that the behaviors of Pere Villagers and Manus high school students must be seen as rational responses given their perceptions of how education could affect their future lives. Thus I assert that part of the decline in academic achievement in Manus should be attributed to how students constructed academic success and what "goods" were worth pursuing in life. While parents and relatives often encouraged students to work hard and behave in school, the anti-academic culture produced by students projected a contrary set of values. Thus many students struggled with dilemmas about how academic success and aspirations for work in the cash sector would affect their relationships and friendships with classmates. I treat these in-school friendships as new Melanesian social forms which function to provide companionship and affective support for processes of self construction and thereby shape the academic engagement and identity of students. In this sense, I argue that high schools in contemporary Papua New Guinea must be seen as social fields (Terrell, 1996) wherein developing selves, and indeed, personhood are negotiated.

In the first two chapters I locate the study in the relevant literature and describe my research methods. In Chapter 2 I review pertinent aspects of Manus culture and history in order to build a context for the study. I cite findings from the rich tradition of anthropological research conducted in Manus to illuminate features of this cultural

history which are related to the research problem at hand. I focus on shifts in subsistence patterns, economic exchange, and relations with Europeans during this century because all have shaped Manus attitudes towards formal education. In addition, I discuss anthropological treatments of identity and the related processes of objectification and valuation of tradition, as they appear in my later arguments about student identity dilemmas.

In Chapter 3 I provide a rationale for the study and sketch the theoretical framework I use to interpret academic engagement in Manus. In the chapter's first section I describe how Papua New Guinea's educational system has affected its social structure and how educational policies intended to prepare an elite for post-colonial rule have limited the majority of students' access to post-secondary education. I also review Papua New Guinean educational research findings on factors affecting academic achievement, plans for expansion at the secondary level, and Manus Province's new "Education for All" policy. In the chapter's second section I discuss how considerations of structural constraint, identity, agency, interaction, morality, and cultural production constitute the lense through which I will examine issues of academic engagement in Manus. At the end of the chapter I describe the study's research design, methods, and limitations.

Chapter 4 describes how Pere Villagers were responding to some of the social and economic conditions of Papua New Guinea in 1994-95 and focuses on a newly emerging ambivalent attitude towards formal education. Primarily through remittances and limited cash-earning opportunities, Pere Villagers have been able to consume some

imported goods and media. However, the chapter shows that a shift away from the village in critical economic resources, a need to maintain worth and a degree of control over those living in towns, and the continued viability of local subsistence strategies have led Pere Villagers to make claims to a somewhat invented traditionality or village-based identity. I also present evidence which shows the heterogeneous practices, attitudes, and motivations of both parents and students in this context. I argue that Pere Villagers' discouragement over the extent to which formal education could make a return on their investment has contributed to this invented and valorized traditionality.

In the remaining chapters I shift to the high schools in Lorengau, though throughout them I frequently make connections to the village context. In Chapter 5 I describe the high school environment in town, then delineate the climate of academic disengagement which existed in the two high schools under study during the 1995 school year. I show how this anti-academic climate was apparent in student absenteeism, truancy, a dearth of in-class participation, poor study habits, and both subtle and violent resistance of teachers and administrators. In Chapter 6 I offer explanations for this student underachievement and resistance. I argue that partially due to a lack of strong parental involvement, inconsistent enforcement of rules by teachers, and their own developing personal subjectivities, Manus students were left with more freedom to construct the meanings associated with their schooling experiences. Therefore, students' academic disengagement was motivated in part by their own subjective assessment of the opportunity structure after high school and their knowledge that they could return to their villages if they did not receive an offer for further education or employment. I argue that

this was a rational response by students given their perceived life-chances. In addition to fostering a "casual" attitude towards their studies and resisting school authorities, I show how these sentiments led many students to pursue social experiences over school success.

In Chapter 7 I describe how Manus high schools functioned as social fields. I describe the egalitarian village-based identity which many students, in the knowledge of their likely return to their villages, valorized in order to maintain worth in high school. I show how this identity was similar to the one being constructed in Pere Village, had moral value, and was normalized throughout the student culture through the interactions of students. I concentrate on the implications of this anti-academic identity for students: How those who adopted behaviors (including school success) which were associated with identities as wage-earners in the cash economy were ridiculed by their peers. I then describe the experiences of several students within the schools. I show that while some of them were able to form syncretic identities and adopt practices which enabled them to preserve, to varying degrees, their academic achievement, aspirations and friendships, others succumbed to the negative influence of their classmates.

One of the most startling findings of this research was that the anti-academic student culture produced by the students constituted an emic social critique of the implications of educational and occupational success for Papua New Guineans. Students' criticisms of their peers for acting "extra," "fancy," or "expensive" were aimed directly at those behaviors which were implicated in the formation of hierarchical social relations in Papua New Guinea. Thus, students used their own cultural resources, imbued with moral

weight, to resist educational processes which they felt would rupture the very social fabric in which they were grounding their identities. In this sense, I argue that the anti-academic student cultures in these high schools must be seen as creative forms of resistance to the continuing penetration of capitalist relations on the periphery of the world system.

# CHAPTER 2

## SOCIAL CHANGE PROCESSES IN COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL MANUS

### Introduction

In this chapter I review pertinent aspects of Manus culture and history in order to build a context for the descriptive data offered in this dissertation. In addition, I use findings from anthropological research conducted in Manus and Papua New Guinea to illuminate features of this cultural history which are relevant to the study. Accordingly, I first frame the cultural history of Manus, and my own research, within the larger context of the global political economy. I then discuss Manus geography, population, early history, and the religion and social organization of Pere village as described by Mead and Fortune in their first field trip to the province in 1928. Next, I describe early contacts with Europeans and changes in the region during the colonial era - especially the beginning of contract labor and the arrival of missions and mission schools. Finally I explore the impact of World War II on the province, the Paliau Movement which followed it, and the hugely successful expansion of education which spawned the province's primary "industry:" a vibrant system of education, migration and remittance. Throughout the section I focus on shifts in Manus subsistence patterns, economic exchange, and relations with Europeans during this century because all have shaped Manus attitudes towards formal education. I also discuss the objectification and

valuation of tradition and related shifts in identity because they will appear in my later arguments about student dilemmas.

## Political Economy

Anthropologists have recently stressed the importance of describing linkages between the societies they study and the larger political and economic contexts of which they are a part (Meillassoux, 1981; Carrier, 1992; Gewertz and Errington, 1995). Some anthropologists working in Melanesia have been especially vocal about prior researchers' underestimation of the effects linkages with the outside world have had on local societies. They have recently written ethnographies which include the complex range of often competing, conflicting, and apparently contradictory practices, beliefs, and aspirations which constitute modernity in Melanesia (Carrier and Carrier, 1989; Gewertz and Errington, 1991; Otto, 1991).

For example, James and Achsah Carrier (Carrier and Carrier, 1989; see also Carrier, 1984) suggested anthropologists examine points of articulation between the commodity relations of the world system and the gift relations of village societies. They provided an example of this approach with their study of how traditional kinship relations in Ponam were reinforced through exchanges funded by remittances from relatives working in the cash sector. Indeed, they found that some people aspired to cash employment precisely so they could contribute to village exchange.

Moreover, changing political and economic circumstances have led to shifts in tradition and identity - which will be discussed in more detail below. Largely because of

remittances from relatives, many Papua New Guineans have been able to consume an ever-growing quantity and variety of Western goods in their natal villages. The growing presence of imported goods in villages all over Papua New Guinea is, along with the articulation described above, blurring distinctions between the "traditional" and the "modern" (Errington and Gewertz, 1996a). Situating a study in this wider political economic context, then, allows for a more finely-grained description of the practices, aspirations, and processes of self-definition of the people at hand.

## Manus Geography and Population

Manus Province, located approximately 300 kilometers north of the Papua New Guinean mainland, consists of the Bismarck Archipelago (also known as the Admiralty Islands) - one large main island (60 kilometers long and 30 kilometers wide) and a number of smaller offshore islands spread over an area of several hundred square kilometers. In 1980 the province had a population of 33,515 (Manus Division of Health and Spiritual Development). Approximately 30 languages are spoken in the province. Titan, from the southeast coast and coastal islands, is the most widely used. It has approximately 4,000 speakers (Otto 1991). (See Appendix A for physical and linguistic maps of Manus.)

## Precolonial Manus

### Subsistence, Trade, and Warfare

Before colonial contact, the region was ecologically differentiated and had an extensive maritime trade network (Schwartz, 1963). Villages were either built on the

coasts of the islands or in the interior of the main island itself. Coastal villages were located in lagoons or on small, mostly infertile islands, and the residents specialized in fishing and marine transport. These villages had highly complex systems of marine tenure. Ownership of portions of reefs, sea, species of fish, and fishing techniques were all guarded by agnatic[1] lineages and organized by a kinship framework of rights and counterrights (Carrier and Carrier, 1989). Villages located in the interior of Manus Island itself had extensive land resources and specialized in gardening. Coastal villages routinely exchanged fish for the sago and vegetables cultivated by the gardeners of the interior. In addition, there were several large volcanic islands to the southeast of Manus Island, whose residents had both gardens and fishing grounds. A few areas had unique resources of worth to the entire area: The volcanic island of Lou to the southeast had obsidian; certain mainland areas and Mbuke island to the southwest had clay for pottery; and some small northcoast islands had beds of the shells used for money (Carrier, 1984).

As this study is concerned with new forms of Manus friendships, I should mention that much of this inter-village trade was conducted through trade "partners" or "friends." These were formal, reciprocal, paired relationships which were passed down between generations. In addition to the exchange value of the goods involved, these partnerships also allowed for the accumulation of obligation and credit. These relationships carried with them a taboo against conducting warfare against members of the other party (Schwartz, 1963; Carrier and Carrier, 1989).

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[1] Related through male descent.

Indeed, violent conflict was common in the precolonial era. Conflict occurred so frequently at markets that women were forbidden to attend them (Carrier, 1984). Moreover, villages were in a more or less continual state of readiness to defend against raids, a large proportion of which came from the south coast Titan and Mantankor of the outlying south eastern islands. Captives taken in raids were often traded for obsidian with the Lou islanders to the southeast, where the captives were then eaten. Attractive female captives were taken back to the village of the raiding party and used as prostitutes for one or two years before being returned to their village of origin (Otto, 1991).

Entailment, Ceremonial Exchange, and Hierarchy

Manus social life was governed by a complex system of reciprocal exchange obligations between patrilineages. Fortune (1934) described the cosmological underpinnings of this system of entailments in his classic, "Manus Religion." To summarize, each man worshipped his father's "sir ghost." Each Manus house was governed by one of these ghosts which were personal guardians against sickness, disaster, and death. Most importantly, they also enforced clan and village solidarity: The patrilineal clans were all bound together by mutual economic entailments which occurred through marriage between their members. These obligations were made in the names of the ghosts of the clans, who wanted to keep the clans together.

While inheritance, residence, status, and spiritual protection in Manus were all patrilineal in origin, in Fortune's view, social organization was balanced by a special magical power inherited by the matrilineal line over the collateral patrilineal line. This

power, originating from the Tandritanitani cult, gave women power to bless and/or curse the children of their brothers. The Manus, then, were obliged by these ghosts and the magic of the Tandritanitani cult to honor dead and living relatives through a system of affinal exchange which marked life events - especially puberty (which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6), marriage, and death.

Precolonial Manus was a two-rank society consisting of lapans and laus - the former had higher status than the latter. These were ascribed statuses which occurred within clans - though there were documented instances of laus attaining lapan rank through exceptional performance in warfare or exchange. All living members of a lineage shared the same rank, and status within families was based on birth order. Mead noted that the privileges of lapans were largely ornamental. They ate out of carved bowls and were able to hang shells on their house, canoe, and belt. Moreover, the luluai (war-leader), the most respected man in the clan, who represented it in inter-village exchanges, was chosen from the ranks of lapans.

Mead (1930) maintained, though, that in Pere the most important source of inequality originated from differential performance in affinal exchange, particularly in bridewealth payments (marriages were usually arranged between cross cousins). Mead described this system as an "economic treadmill" wherein older men adopted young men, and sponsored them by providing bridewealth payments to their families. In return, the younger men had to work and support the older men until it was deemed that their debt had been repaid. This would be signalled by the young man's ability to conduct an exchange in his own name. Thus Mead wrote that Manus men had to work extremely

hard to "get out from under" the enormous social debts they would normally accrue (1937, p. 224). Those men who did amass considerable power and prestige through the system (usually of lapan rank) competed with each other, and occasionally demonstrated their wealth through larger-scale inter-village ceremonial feasts which furthered their standing and enhanced trade relationships. These wealthier men tended to make marriage alliances between themselves, and poor men respected this freedom; thus the village was stratified in terms of economic status.

Mead also mentioned, however, that there was another group of men who, due to infirmities or other limitations, stepped out of the exchange competition and concentrated on providing subsistence for their families. I will return to the current prevalence of this kind of lifestyle in Chapter 4.

In summary, the social life of precolonial Manus villages was structured by a patrilineal exchange system. While there was an ascribed system of rank, stratification in the village occurred primarily through differential performance in the exchange system. More broadly, despite its linguistic diversity and frequent conflict, the pre-colonial Bismark archipelago was integrated through a system of inter-village exchange and trade friendships.

## Early Contacts and Early Colonialism

The Admiralty Islands were named by Philip Carteret in 1767, whom Otto reports, was greeted with a shower of spears (1991). More contacts with English and American whaling vessels were likely made in the mid-19th century as the archipelago

lay near primary whaling routes. Informal trade was soon initiated between these whalers and the Admiralty Islanders. Historical accounts indicate that European traders valued the area as a source of pearl shell, tortoise shell, and beche-de-mer (sea cucumber); the islanders valued the trade for iron.

In the late 19th century, a small number of German traders established themselves primarily in the eastern part of the province, and in 1885 the Admiralty Islands were declared a German protectorate to be administered by the New Guinea Company. There were a number of violent confrontations between traders and villagers, including several episodes where villagers murdered traders to capture their weapons - to attack other villages. Five years after one of these killings on Pak Island, the German Governor dispatched a warship to shell the island in belated retaliation. A few years later, the German administrator Zwanzger showed a gathering of village leaders a large warship (the "Sanot") and simply said, "If you do not listen to me, this ship will shoot you in your villages" (Kuluah, 1977, in Otto, 1991).

Though violence was involved in the initial establishment of the colonial state in Manus, both Otto (1991) and Schwartz (1975c) have written that for the Manus people, a feeling of relief must have accompanied the abolishment of inter-village warfare: Villagers soon saw that the colonial government could settle disputes and retaliate for violence done to them by other villagers.

Meanwhile young Manus men began to sign labor contracts and go away to work for 3-5 years on plantations, ships, or as "police boys." The contract labor experience had two important effects on the lives of these young men. First, returning laborers

brought with them a flow of new western goods into Manus villages. This wealth improved the status of these young men and gave them some early credit in their village exchange relations. Second, laborers met men from different Manus (and New Guinean) villages while working under indenture. Otto asserted that this situation had an important ideological effect: Within these extra-village relationships, workers communicated about colonial conditions and ultimately began to conceptualize their native way of life as opposed to, and inferior to, the way of white people. The white people seemed more powerful, and their lives easier, healthier, and wealthier. Schwartz labeled this situation "value dominance" (1975c, p. 174). Otto stated that this led to the "objectification of tradition" (1991, p. 143):

> Thus, indigenous cultures were generalized, related to the past, and critically assessed in one conceptual move. This move is the creation of "tradition" as a political term. (1991, p. 145)

In this sense, rather than being an unquestioned, inherited set of values, "tradition" became open to examination and change. Furthermore, Otto asserted that this move fostered a willingness and ability on the part of Manus people to reject various elements of "tradition" and accept certain institutions of white people, especially if they believed that these institutions could lead to a better life. The most important of these white institutions, as I will show in the following section, were churches and schools. I will return to the "objectification of tradition" below and in later chapters.

The Introduction and Embrace of Churches and Schools

The advent of schooling in the New Guinea Territory had far-reaching effects on local economies, social relations and personhood. As in many other parts of the world at the time, education was seen as a key element in the justification and implementation of the colonial project. It was intended to inculcate Christian morality through teaching literacy (which would give access to the teachings of the bible) and to inculcate Western civilization through teaching the values of a European-style work ethic (Fife, 1995a). Thus, while it is generally agreed that mass schooling emerged in most developing countries as an instrument of elite class domination (a point which I will develop further in Chapter 3), Boli and Ramirez (1992) have pointed out that this domination involved the propagation of the economic and cultural individualism of the Christian West. Indeed, one colonial official stated that "the future of Papua depends on the training of all its people in the habits of industry" (Viner et al, 1919:227, in Fife, 1995a).

These habits were, from a missionary perspective, notoriously absent among Papua New Guineans. Thus, the first mission educators in Papua New Guinea had no qualms about openly expressing their distaste for indigenous traditions. The Lutheran missionary Johann Flierl wrote in 1920:

> It is the greatest importance to train the character of the natives. ...they must see the low level on which they are living and must be taught to raise themselves to a state worthy of human beings. But to train and educate the native will only be possible when and where they have cast aside their pagan ideas. ...as long as they cling to the old ideas there is no possibility of elevating them. (reprinted in Smith, 1987; cited in Fife 1995a)

Education, then, was initially introduced by missions as a means of elevating through conversion.

The first mission in Manus was established at Papitalai, near Lorengau, in 1913. The first mission vernacular school was started in 1918 at Bundralis on the north coast. The Manus responded to the introduction of churches by resisting first, but then by whole-heartedly collaborating. Otto explains this embrace through Bordieu's (1977) notion of habitus, by arguing that the Manus had always had a concern with the efficacy of knowledge:

> This concern with efficacy, and the belief that knowledge, if true, is efficacious may be considered as a basic disposition, as part of the habitus of Baluan people and Manus people in general. (1991, p. 122)

Otto argues that the Manus saw the missionaries' knowledge as efficacious - it prescribed particular actions which would lead to desired outcomes. For example, the missionaries' treatment of serious disease resonated in the Manus villagers' habitus: They prayed to God ("Our father") to ask for recovery; if they sinned, the sin would lead to misery; if they atoned for their sins, they would recover.

Mead also related an example of the Manus concern with efficacy in her description of how, in 1929, the people of Pere made a conscious choice between the two missions then available: Catholic and Evangelical. They decided to become Catholic for three carefully deliberated reasons: 1) The Catholics taught their converts to read and write in the lingua franca of Pidgin English; 2) They didn't collect as much money as the Evangelicals; and 3) They practiced auricular confession (1975[1956], p. 92). More to the point, Schwartz (1975c) wrote that the Manus discarded their own religion and

adopted Catholicism largely out of disappointment at the failure of their own ancestors to provide materially for them as well as these new Gods had provided for the Europeans.[2] These reasons for conversion in Pere are consistent with the Manus habitus described by Otto.

The local adoption of Christianity was manifest in a certain moral authority for mission teachers in the classroom. Fife used Bourdieu's construct of "pedagogical authority" to describe this situation in colonial New Guinea:

> Pedagogical authority refers to ...an authority that is meant to invoke unquestioned obediance and acceptance of whatever cultural values are being presented as "knowledge" within the curriculum. (Fife, 1995a, p. 73)

Fife added that teachers normally reinforced this authority with corporal punishment.[3]

In the years before WWII, however, the schooling which accompanied conversion was usually of low quality and oriented to the needs of the mission. Elite students were trained to become evangelists, and others trained for work as soldiers, police, and as plantation workers. After the war, the missions built up their teaching services by training new teachers, opening up new elementary schools, and establishing a high school near Lorengau at Papitalai. Indeed, in the post-war era, when it became clear that schooling could lead to white collar employment in the cash sector, the Manus underwent a virtual explosion of interest in education. This development will be

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[2] Indeed, Mead reported that after she and Fortune left Pere in 1928, the villagers held one last lapan feast, and threw the skulls of their sir ghosts into the sea, before the arrival of the missionaries the following year.

[3] See Fife 1995a for a complete treatment of education and inequality in PNG from 1870-1945.

explained below, again with reference to Otto's Manus habitus. However, the war itself and its aftermath merit attention first.

## World War II and the Paliau Movement

The most far-reaching event in the history of Manus peoples' contact with the Western world was the passage of close to a million American G.I.s through the province during World War II. The Japanese captured Manus peacefully in 1942, and it was recaptured by the Americans in 1944 as part of their drive through the Western Pacific towards Japan. Some changes, such as the compliance with the colonial administration, a head tax of ten shillings per year, various quarantine measures (see Denoon, 1989) and other laws which constrained behavior, were forced upon the Manus. However, Schwartz wrote that seeing relatively prosperous black and white American soldiers live and work side by side on an equitable basis had inspired an openness to Western knowledge and exacerbated Manus peoples' dissatisfaction with material aspects of their own way of life (1975c). Mead suggested that the aftermath of World War II had brought a desire for change with the United States as the primary model (1975[1956]). Moreover, Otto (1991) found that the Manus thought the Americans had been hiding this wealth all along. Manus people felt they had been lied to about the extent of the foreigners' resources, and more importantly that the foreigners had withheld the knowledge that would enable the Manus to obtain the same wealth. The Manus blamed Europeans' "unwillingness to share" (Schwartz, 1975c, p. 173).

After the war the Manus desire for change and material wealth was first apparent in a series of cargo cults, the most full-blown of which was known as "The Noise" and occurred on Rambutyo Island to the southeast. People destroyed their possessions and awaited the arrival of Western wealth (TP:[4] "kago"). While these dreams went unfulfilled, a charismatic leader named Paliau Maloat from the south coast island of Baluan returned to the province in 1946 after serving for many years as a policeman in Rabaul. Frustrated himself at the inability of Manus to obtain equality with white people, Paliau claimed to be able to supply the knowledge that had been withheld. He offered a comprehensive program to amend the situation. His "New Way" (TP: "nupela passin") stressed village unity and the importance of pooling money to ultimately buy emancipation and attain equality with the whites. The movement removed many of the social divisions within villages (including access to maritime resources), and completely abolished traditional feasts and exchanges with the exception of marriage payments, which could be met with a fixed amount of Western money (Schwartz, 1962). Paliau encountered resistance primarily in elder wealthy villagers whose monopolies over certain resources were destroyed by the movement's embrace of Western substitutes.

Thus, when Margaret Mead (accompanied by Schwartz and Foerstal) made her first return visit in 1953, her progressive positivism led her to describe an unprecedented cultural transformation. In "New Lives for Old" Mead downplayed the fact that these developments occurred in a context of deep colonial control and applauded the Manus' strident efforts towards democracy and economic development. She asserted that the

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[4] Tok Pisin or NeoMelanesian.

Pere culture was changing faster than anywhere else in the world at the time. Schwartz reported that the Pere villagers were calling the ways of their ancestors "bullshit" and were aiming to achieve a European lifestyle by radically reducing the traditional exchange system (1992).[5]

The Expansion of Education in Manus

Consistent with the efficacy of knowledge habitus described above, throughout the 1950s the Manus became increasingly eager for knowledge that would make them equal to Europeans. While in its early years members of the Paliau Movement had been opposed to formal education because the knowledge taught there had not palpably reduced inequality with Europeans, their stance changed with the introduction of local village councils. These councils allowed villagers greater control over local schools than ever before. Manus increasingly felt that Western knowledge was the key to improving their standard of living. This sentiment was evident in the early concerns of some parents that their schools were not good enough because they only taught people how to read and write - but not how to make cement, glass, or steel (Otto, 1991).

The strong Manus motivation for schooling during this period led one Australian administrator to characterize them as having "an almost fanatical thirst for education" (Manus District Annual Reports, 1956, p. 34, in Otto, 1991). And indeed the expansion of education in the 1960s was extremely successful. School attendance was exemplary:

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[5] Indeed, after the war, the Manus wanted the U.S. to take control of the archipelago, rather than the Australians.

In 1965 the attendance rate was 98.16% for the entire district. In 1968 the teacher-student ratio was a healthy 1:25. Moreover, the quality of schools became more uniform with the introduction of the Education Ordinance of 1970 and Teaching Service Ordinance of 1971, which gave government and church schools the same legal footing and government funding and control of the curriculum. This high standard of education continued through the mid-1980s when Manus High School sent more students on to national high school than any other high school in PNG (Otto, 1991).

As more Manus became educated, they were able to migrate out of the province to better jobs and remit substantial amounts of money to relatives in their natal villages. By the early 1960s villages began to undergo a shift in the proportion of their consumption (and exchange) which was provided through local production and remittance.[6]

For example, the Carriers' research on the north coast island of Ponam focused on the development of education, migration, and remittance dependency. They found that because the island had a slightly impoverished resource base, the villagers quickly became dependent on remittances from working relatives to purchase imported goods such as outboard motors, nets, school fees, pigs, and to make large contributions to ceremonial exchanges (1989).

Moreover, as imported goods began to replace local goods and wage labor became more broadly available as a source of wealth, there was a shift in the operation of

[6] As the Paliau Movement's moratorium on ceremonial exchanges on the south coast eroded, there was an increase in the role of remittances in this domain of village life also (Carrier and Carrier, 1989; Otto, 1991).

kinship and affinal exchange. Wealthy villagers found it more difficult to attract clients and control wealth, and economic stratification gradually diminished. Partly due to the erosion of their traditional authority, people felt less obligated to the lapans, and large-scale exchange died out. Affinal exchange began to revolve more around sets of siblings than competing lapans and, accordingly, it became more rigidly structured and egalitarian.

The Carriers asserted that meanwhile a symbiotic relationship developed between residents and migrants. While the residents were dependent on remittances for consumption, migrants needed the respect, identity and credit they gained in participating in exchanges - especially as these affected their future land claims. Virtually all migrants planned on returning to the village after retiring from work because it was the only place they could afford to build a house and, more importantly, because they had an emotional need to return to the village (1989).

Thus Ponam villagers, and Manus villagers in general, thought of their child's education as an investment - the cost of a commodity that would generate a cash return. When John Carrier asked 33 parents in Ponam why they sent their children to secondary school, 32 of them said, "get knowledge, get work, help me" (1984:46). Indeed, Ponam adults had a saying: "Children are our garden, and we survive by eating the fruit" (1984, p. 49). The Carriers' research illustrated how European contact and historical contingency "put old forms of social organization and practice in a new context and led to the creation of new forms" (1989, p. 238).

The Carriers estimated that 1.2 million kina flowed into the province in 1980. We heard similar estimates during our stay in 1994-95. Thus the embrace of education in Manus may be seen as a successful cooption of external opportunity by the local inhabitants. More specifically Otto wrote that,

> It may be concluded that the traditional Manus concern with the efficacy of knowledge had been translated successfully into contemporary economic realities and that this adaptation presumably reinforced their habitual epistemological stance. (1991, p. 198)

I will discuss this reinforced epistemological stance regarding efficacy of knowledge further in later chapters. I want to show that, as wage earning opportunities in Papua New Guinea's cash sector have decreased, this disposition underlay many parents' and students' diminishing confidence that education could improve their lives.

## Identity in the Post-Colonial Context

As this study is concerned with the effects of student identity dilemmas on academic engagement, it is grounded in anthropological descriptions of how Melanesian identity has been affected by social change. Recent anthropological research in this area has focused on how Melanesians have been able to combine seemingly disparate elements into their identities, and how their constructions of "tradition"[7] have often been an important resource in this process.

[7] Throughout this research report, I use quotations around the terms "tradition" and "modern" when I want to emphasize the fact that they are constructions of the present day context.

The "traditional" Melanesian self has been described as constitutive of social relationships to a far greater degree than the Western self - it reflects the region's tightly woven social fabric (Leenhardt, 1979).[8] White stated more specifically that,

> In the tightly interwoven and constantly public arenas of village life where persons are conceptualized as enmeshed in interdependent relations of all sorts, social and moral thought frequently de-emphasize the individual as the primary locus of experience. (1991, p. 6)

Many anthropologists have commented on the impact of colonial and post-colonial circumstances on indigenous identities - particularly changing economic relationships, formal education, and the penetration of popular media. Friedman said that history itself could be seen as a discourse of identity, which consists of "attributing a meaningful past to a structured present" (1992, p. 194). As the relational links which provided the basis for "traditional" identities were weakened by the Western model of economic self-interest, Schwartz (1975a) said that local peoples were presented with the problem of fashioning an identity without precedent. Miller (1994) elaborated that these peoples had increasing responsibility for creating their own identities.

Gewertz has labeled this process the "development of the individual" in Melanesia (personal communication). She and Errington state that this involves the creation of increasingly subjective selves and social contexts which enable more self-expression and personal choice. Thus, primary dimensions of identity are formed through personal experiences (including consumption of Western goods and media) and freely-entered (and unentailed) social relationships. This results in social attitudes which

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[8] See Murray (1993), and particularly, Spiro (1993) for a thorough treatment of the "peculiarity" of the Western self in comparative perspective.

are based more on personal choice than on external "traditional" constraints (Gewertz and Errington, 1996). While this appears to be the general direction of identity change in Melanesia, local peoples have also demonstrated an ability to create "syncretic" identities which combine apparently contradictory "modern" and "traditional" themes in complex, textured layers (White, 1991, p. 2).

The experience of people living in villages, in particular, has been characterized as a struggle to establish identity and worth in contexts of disparate power (Gewertz and Errington, 1991). Linnekin (1990) and Lederman (1986) have noted that in these struggles with modern forces, symbols construed as "indigenous," or "traditional" appear to be important resources for self-creation (Linnekin 1990). They have also appeared as such in Manus, as I will examine next.

## The Politics of Culture and the Revaluation of "Tradition" in Manus

For the purposes of this study it is important to understand how "tradition" (TP: "kastam") has been objectified, politicized, and constructed according to the needs of Manus people in this century. People have invoked tradition in villages and, as I will show, in schools to assert worth and maintain a degree of control in circumstances in which power and important resources have shifted away from them (Errington and Gewertz, 1995).

The Pacific has been a fertile area for the study of the politics of culture and identity given its enormous variety of differentiated cultures and recently formed

democracies. Indeed, anthropological writings on the construction and manipulation of culture have become a minor industry over the last decade (Lindstrom and White, 1995).

Much of the renewed interest in the politics of culture can be attributed to work of Keesing and Tonkinson which appeared in 1982. They asserted that colonial conditions made people more conscious of their collective identity, which led to a re-evaluation of indigenous traditions that were once taken for granted. They argued that since the time when colonial conditions (and, as we saw earlier, the contract labor experience) led to an "objectification of tradition," native constructions of culture have often reflected contemporary political, economic, and social pressures. Feinberg (1995) pointed out that even in the same community, understandings of culture could depend on one's structural position and individual experience. Anthropologists also emphasized how these understandings of culture could be manipulated to promote a variety of personal and group agendas. They advised that historical, political, and economic circumstances be examined for clues as to how and why culture is valorized at any one moment (Lindstrom and White, 1995; Feinberg, 1995). The "invention of culture" has been a hotly debated topic. One indigenous scholar wrote that the concept was yet another attempt by a foreign scholar to assert his authority at the expense of local peoples (Trask, 1991).

In Papua New Guinea, where many material resources have shifted to towns and cities, people in villages have frequently invoked "traditional" culture to maintain a degree of control. Errington and Gewertz assert, however, that this process can change "tradition" itself. It becomes defined as a matter of personal or collective choice and

appreciation (Gewertz and Errington, 1996), and becomes seen as "a means to transitory and self-serving ends" (Errington and Gewertz, 1996, p. 114).

In Manus, largely due to the growth of formal government and the Paliau movement's call for an end to traditional feasting and exchange, it appeared through much of the 1950s and 60s that "tradition" was dying out. However, the growth of large-scale migration in the beginning of the 1960s coincided with a gradual revaluation (and construction) of tradition all over Manus. The beginnings of this revaluation were internal: A few leaders of traditional status attempted to reassert their authority. On Baluan several leaders began to organize new "traditional" ceremonies called "Polpolot" in defiance of Paliau (Otto, 1991). In Pere, Schwartz (1962) reported a tradition-like exchange between cross-cousins called "Pilei" in 1953. Later, Schwartz reported that slow economic growth since the boom of the 1960s and 70s led to a "recalibration of expectations" in the village with regard to change, as well as a "selective reactivation" of traditional beliefs and practices (1975a).

There were also external developments which reinforced tradition. Tradition was used by Manus residents to ensure cooperation from migrant relatives. They sometimes used their cursing power (in Pere, originating from the Tandritanitani cult mentioned above) on especially close relatives who turned down requests for money or gifts. Migrants feared these sanctions from dissatisfied kinspeople: Schwartz reported that a prosperous Manus man living in Port Moresby had told him that his "buttocks [were] afraid" because his father had cursed him. As a result, the son failed an exam and missed a job opportunity (1975a, p. 320). Traditional exchanges (TP: "kastomwok") -especially

mortuary exchanges- have continued to be important in Manus village economic life. These exchanges have increasingly been called "bisnis" - a good way to make money - especially by older people (Otto 1991:253).

In addition, Otto identified other external developments which reinforced kastam: 1) A government policy that staffed land demarcation committees with indigenous people (thus leading to a heightened interest in "traditional" principles of land ownership); 2) An increase in indigenous people in the education department, who began to invite skilled villagers into schools to teach traditional skills, crafts, and arts; and 3) The emergence of "tradition" as a visible topic of discussion at the national level, and the subject of considerable ideological justification before independence (Papua New Guineans intended to do things in a Papua New Guinean way).

Thus I approach the revaluation of tradition as a further development of the objectification of indigenous culture. These are ongoing attempts by people in situations of increased powerlessness to maintain control and self-worth.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to situate this study in the cultural history of twentieth century Manus and to show how it is informed by current anthropological approaches to political economy, "tradition," and identity. The interpretive approach to student resistance outlined in the next chapter will use these perspectives to consider linkages between villages, schools, and surrounding structures of power. Moreover, the argument acknowledges that in these contexts of disparate power, people have shown a

tendency to use tradition as both a political tool, and as a resource for their ongoing processes of self-creation. I will show in later chapters that in 1995, parallel processes of valorizing indigenous "tradition" and identity were occurring in Pere and in Manus high schools.

# CHAPTER 3

## INTERPRETING ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT IN MANUS

### Introduction

In this chapter I provide a rationale for the study embedded in local educational processes, sketch a theoretical framework which I will use to understand how students may resist schooling practices intended to make them into modern citizens, and describe the methods I employed during the course of the research. In later chapters I will show that one of the most important factors affecting Manus students' investment in school in 1995 was their perception of extremely limited educational and employment opportunities after Grade 10. In this chapter's first section I discuss how this came to be. I offer a brief history of the educational system's development: The motives behind its design and structure, enrollment trends, emphasis on examinations, and school-leaver problem. Education has affected PNG's social structure for several decades, and policies of limiting educational opportunities from the colonial era continue to perpetuate inequality in the country. I then focus on Papua New Guinean educational research findings on factors affecting academic achievement. Finally, I discuss plans for educational expansion at the secondary level, and describe Manus Province's new "Education for All" policy, and the province's related nine-year decline in academic achievement. It was this decline, in fact, which caused the Manus Assistant Secretary for Education to request research to account for it, and which led to my study.

The second section sketches the theoretical framework I use for this study of student experience. I begin with post-structuralist treatments of how power is used in schools and structuralist perspectives on how schools reproduce class and status inequalities in society. I then introduce perspectives on students' active responses to these structural constraints, including how students resist schooling processes and produce their own cultural forms in opposition to them. I discuss how student academic engagement, in contexts such as Papua New Guinea, may be largely shaped by dilemmas over the relative valuation of school-based and home-based knowledge, aspirations, and identity. In this sense school must be seen as one of the most important settings where young people construct their identities and gain direction over what is worth pursuing in life. Finally I describe how students may use their home communities as a resource for this process of self-creation in school, and how these communities can become imbued with moral weight. I suggest how these "moral communities" (Shaw, 1994) can shape the counter-school cultural forms which students produce in schools. At the end of the chapter I discuss the study's design, methods of data collection and analysis, and limitations.

## The Role of Education in the Development of Independent Papua New Guinea

From the early 1960s, the United Nations and local populations pressured the Australian administrators of colonial Papua New Guinea to begin to develop an educated elite that could take over the bureaucracies which Australia would leave behind. This was accomplished via the rapid expansion of secondary and tertiary education systems at

the expense of a universal primary system. Thus colonial New Guinea's educational system took on a highly "pyramidical" structure (Bray, 1992, p. 179): primary schools went up to grade 6, and students who passed an examination went on to grade 7. Most provinces then had another exam after the grade 8 year which further reduced their grade 9 enrollment, and the examination after grade 10 produced a smaller number of students who went on to tertiary education - either in national high schools (which later could lead to admission to one of the two universities in the country), or to one of the specialized colleges (teaching, fisheries, primary industry).

In the late 1960s, however, it began to became apparent that the modernization of Papua New Guinea via this pyramidical educational system would create a stratified society. While the indigenous educated elite assumed an increasing number of positions in the government and formal economy, the expanded secondary system produced a growing number of unemployed school leavers: By the early 1970s it was clear that the number of secondary and community school graduates was rising while the number of urban jobs was falling.[1]

Thus education planners in Papua New Guinea, anxious to avoid Dore's "diploma disease"[2] reversed the prior trend. They restricted the growth of the educational system

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[1] An English term in origin, school leaver refers to youth who have, either by choice or from a result on formal examinations (usually taken around age 16), not gone forward to tertiary education or entered the job market.

[2] Dore (1976) postulated that in developing countries where educational development was driven by labor markets, a direct correlation would soon arise between educational credentials and individual merit and skill. He theorized that the situation not only led teachers to teach to exams and students to study solely for exam success, but also to an overproduction of graduates who could not find employment.

at the secondary and tertiary levels and focused on developing primary education where, it was thought, lay the greatest return on educational investment. No new national high schools were built between 1976 and 1991 to supplement the four in existence. Meanwhile, the mineral boom of the 1980s combined with a dearth of qualified nationals led to a greater reliance on expatriate expertise and more talk of the need for expatriate replacement (Weeks, 1993). Weeks (1993) recently argued that the interests of Papua New Guinea have been ill-served by these fears of "diploma disease," primarily because they have stultified the development of its educational system. He states that restricting the growth of the upper-secondary and tertiary sector has led the whole system to suffer - the primary sector has benefitted little and reliance on expatriate expertise continues to be a costly.

Recent enrollment statistics illustrate the current state of Papua New Guinea's "pyramidical" educational system and the need for expansion. The gross enrollment rate at the primary level in 1989 was approximately 70%[3] (Avalos, 1993). Only 56% of the students who started grade one in 1985 were still enrolled in grade 6 in 1990. About a third of the students from Grade 6 transferred into secondary Grade 7. Approximately 70% of the students who were in Grade 7 in 1986 were in grade 10 in 1989, and approximately 10% of the students from Grade 10 went on to Grade 11 in National High School. Thus around 1.5% of the students who start Grade 1 complete Grade 12. I should also mention that functional adult illiteracy remains at approximately 70% (Bray, 1992).

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[3] Some provinces had over 90% GER, while others were as low as 64%.

Meanwhile, the employment situation for nationals has worsened recently with the twin failures of international aid to support socioeconomic development and of local business and economic development coordinators to create jobs as quickly as educators can create employees. In addition, the close of the enormous Bougainville Copper mine in 1989 due to an ongoing attempt at secession has aggravated the employment picture and diminished the gross national product (Bray, 1985).

Thus at present, Papua New Guinean high schools are faced with the dual function of preparing some students for roles in the formal economy - eventually to replace expatriate expertise; and a majority of others for lives back in their natal villages. Indeed, some estimate that for the foreseeable future, 80% of Papua New Guineans will continue to make their living from a village base (Browne with Scott, 1989). Accordingly, in their philosophy for Papua New Guinea's educational system, educational planners said that in addition to stressing equality, participation, and self-reliance, schools should also emphasize "Papua New Guinea Ways" and "Integral Human Development" (Matane Report, 1986).

One effect of this dual function of Papua New Guinean schools, however, is that educators have been blamed for raising the expectations of youth for wage paying jobs and modern lifestyles beyond existing employment opportunities (see Kulick, 1993, and Powers, 1989, which is discussed further below). There has also been speculation that the restricted upper educational opportunities in the country have contributed to the anger and frustration of Papua New Guinean youth. Indeed, while many school leavers return to their villages and find employment in the informal sector or support themselves

through subsistence economics (Weeks, 1978), others adopt criminal behaviors which have become the object of major concern over the last decade and is currently referred to as the "Raskal Problem" (Senge, 1988; Pacific Islands Monthly, 1993).[4]

Some Papua New Guineans leaders have made powerful ideological statements about how those youth who are pushed out of the educational system ought to find novel ways to become citizens of the modern state. Foremost among these is Bernard Narakobi, who asserted that development has proceeded without any attention to Melanesian values. He said that despite the high rates of urban unemployment for high school graduates, education leads to successful development when graduates incorporate school learning with local Melanesian values (1983). Narakobi called these so called drop outs[5] the cornerstones of the new "authentic" Melanesian societies and was hopeful that they would find a new "Melanesian Way to become good citizens" (1983, pp. 60-61). Indeed researchers have documented ways in which school leavers have successfully used their school-based knowledge to improve the lives of their parents and relatives in their villages (Carrier and Carrier, 1989; Sykes, 1995). However, there is still enormous frustration and embarrassment among school leavers whose expectations for cash employment have been raised by secondary schooling.

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[4] A Tok Pisin term derived from Australian colloquial English, Sykes defines a rascal as "a youth whose disruptive and violent acts are also admired as a marker of impudent virility" (1995, p. 31).

[5] Many Papua New Guinean educational researchers prefer the term "pushout" because it reflects the constraints of the secondary system. See Avalos (1993).

Thus while educational policymakers attempted to stave off unemployment and the "diploma disease" by restricting educational opportunities at the upper secondary and tertiary levels, stagnant development has meant that there are still not enough jobs for secondary school leavers. While some school-leavers have been able to use school learning to help their parents in their natal villages, the situation has led to considerable anger, bitterness, and criminal activity.

Examinations, Competition, and Factors Affecting Achievement

This competitive climate has made Papua New Guinean examinations more important in recent years, both at the primary and secondary levels. The grade 10 exam is especially important, as fewer than 25% of those who complete grade 10 can expect to be selected for further education or professional training - and hence employment in business or government (National Department of Education, 1991; Weeks, 1993; Sykes, 1995). The increased orientation towards exams has spawned fears that teaching in preparation for them occurs at the expense of genuine education (Avalos, 1993). Nevertheless, parents, teachers, and students are very conscious of the need to do well on examinations, and much recent research has focused on factors underlying Papua New Guinean student achievement. This research has revealed a complex of influences which include district geography, school organizational factors, school leadership, quality of teachers, student difficulties with the English-only curriculum, and various student intake factors such as sex, age, and parents' educational background. (For a complete review of

these factors, see Vulliamy, 1987; Gibson and Weeks, 1990; Ahai and Faraclas, 1993; Sengi, 1995).

However, because the in-school dynamics which affect achievement and retention have not been extensively studied, the social and ideological processes by which some students perform well and others perform poorly or leave secondary school are more unclear (Avalos, 1993). Educational researchers have recently called for studies which can describe these more qualitative aspects of school life, such as school climate (Vulliamy, 1987; Crossley, 1993; Sengi, 1995). Ethnographic studies of student culture in other settings have explicated important aspects of students' lives which affect their academic engagement (Cusick, 1973; Willis, 1977; Moffatt, 1989; Rival, 1996). I employ a similar perspective here and use additional qualitative research findings on education in Papua New Guinea, which I discuss below in my review of the theoretical literature which informs the study.

## "Education for All" and the Decline of Educational Achievement in Manus

The Grade 10 "bottleneck" (Weeks, 1993) described above has led to recent plans to expand upper secondary and tertiary educational opportunities in the country.[6] Papua

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[6] Some Papua New Guinean educationists worry that without commensurate expansion of employment opportunities in the modern sector, the expansion of secondary education will increase the level of frustration of young educated people, and thereby, of urban criminality. Avalos, however, argues to the contrary:

> An appropriate conclusion is not that more education leads to crime, but that more or fewer educational opportunities may increase or lessen the chances to alter the power structures that protect crime. That is why it is argued here that education should not be restricted

New Guinea's involvement in the UNESCO, Unicef, and World Bank program for the promotion of Education for All, including an international conference in Jomtien, Thailand, helped initiate Education Sector Reviews in 1991 intended to expand secondary education (National Department of Education, 1991). The reviews express support for bringing more students through to Grade 10 and to expand tertiary education, primarily through top-up province-based national high schools (adding Grades 11 and 12 to existing provincial high schools).

In line with the Education Sector Review, Manus Province instituted a progressive "Education for All" policy in 1991. This policy eliminated the screening examination at the end of Grade 8 and intended to maximize the number of students who would complete Grade 10. Prior to 1991 as many as half of all students in a class would fail this exam and return to their villages. By the mid-1990s, most provinces in PNG had adopted this "block up" policy and now had more "varied" Grade 10 student bodies (School Certificate Examinations Report, 1994).

Since 1987, however, the Mean Rating Index (MRI) for Manus has declined from well above to below the national average, and after the block up in 1991, the MRI dropped precipitously. (The MRI is the percentage of grade 10 students who scored Upper Passes or above in the nationally examined subjects of English, Mathamatics, Social Science, and Science. The MRI is the rating index averaged across all subjects, and a score of 50% indicates average performance for a province - see Appendix B). For the 1993 school year the Manus MRI was the second lowest in Papua New Guinea. This

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(1993, p. 288).

situation embarrassed many people in Manus, as their province had formerly been among the highest-achieving in the country.

Part of Manus' relative decline in performance could be attributed to the educational development of other (mostly highland) provinces (which I will discuss further in a later chapter). However, when I arrived in Manus in October 1994, Provincial Education Officials told me they thought that much of the cause for the decline lay in Manus high schools themselves. The Assistant Secretary for Education (the highest ranking educational official in the province), from the northcoast Manus island of Ahus, explained that the attempt to push all high school students through to Grade 10 was probably partially responsible for the province-wide decline in achievement. He also cited several negative effects: It used many parents' money without a likely return on their investment; it created high expectations for students; and used up the time of teachers and other students. He stated that the Education for All policy meant that,

> You take the cream, and you also take the hobos on board... We all know that if a child is stupid, let him be stupid. God created him and gave him a small brain (Fieldnotes 10/19/94).

He said that a child like the one above might be better off "going back to the nonacademic subjects" or contributing to village life, and that his department was looking at the Education for All policy very closely.

However, he went on to say that regardless of the intelligence of the students, the primary problem was that the "academic quality" at the schools was not very good, and that even the best students were doing worse. He said that the main question was, "Why

do the beautiful Manus children, the intelligent Manus children score very poorly?" He asked me to discern what I could about some of the causes for this decline in academic achievement during my study of student life.

In this section I have reviewed the ongoing role of education in the development of Papua New Guinea, and the recent educational expansion and decline in achievement in Manus, in order to situate my study on both the local and national levels. Most specifically I designed my research to explore the sociocultural and historical influences on Manus students' academic engagement - with particular attention to those influences which originate in students' home villages. I hoped these findings might help local education officials make judgements about the efficacy of the new "Education for All" policy. I also hoped that national plans to broaden access and ensure retention in Papua New Guinean secondary schools would benefit from a case study of how students experience school, particularly, from a study of how students' perceptions of their educational and occupational opportunities and of their home cultural resources shape their investment in schooling. The next section sketches a theoretical framework with which to examine the significant issues of structure, culture, and identity involved in these students' experiences in school.

## Theoretical Framework

Because this research is concerned with student engagement with formal education, it must account for how students apprehend the schooling process and the opportunities and obstacles it presents them. Thus the theoretical framework for the

study is informed by relationships between structure (how the school mediates opportunities in the formal cash economy) and agency (how students creatively respond to these arrangements), and critical educational perspectives on the effects of student identity dilemmas on academic engagement. Accordingly, in this section I first present some of Foucault's insights concerning the uses of power in institutions such as schools in industrializing societies. Reproduction theory situates Foucault's ideas in capitalist countries, but as we shall see, it is also - slightly modified - applicable to Papua New Guinea. After discussing this theory, I then describe Willis's theory of cultural production, and Foley's performance theory of cultural reproduction and resistance in some detail, as both will be at the forefront of the interpretation of my data. Finally, I bring contemporary considerations of identity into the framework. Specifically, I focus on how Manus students' identities are seen as contingent and fluid, yet are formed in relation to both structural forces present and local historically-grounded and morally-imbued cultural resources. This framework will enable me to examine students' experience from their perspective: How their attempts to maintain worth in a context of disparate power affect their own and their peers' academic investment.

## Structure, Power, and Resistance in Schools

This study acknowledges that schools in modern and developing societies articulate with capitalist relations (Apple, 1996). Accordingly, Foucault's (1977) framework for understanding how power is used by modern institutions is a useful theoretical tool. His argument revolves around a "political economy" of the body: The

body may only be used as labor power if it is subjugated through the discipline applied by institutions such as hospitals, prisons, and schools. Through techniques of discipline such as hierarchical observation, punishment, and examinations, power literally produces individuals. For our purposes we should note that Foucault says that examinations constrain supposedly freer persons. Thus in schools, "good" students conform to their roles by following school rules and become complete subordinates (1977).

In the mid-seventies comparative educationists concerned with these issues of power began to focus on how educational systems in capitalist countries prepared students to assume specific positions in the social class structure. The economic determinism of Bowles and Gintis (1976) and the reproduction theory of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) suggested that educational systems in industrial countries were subordinate to, and reflective of, the capitalist production process and structure of class relations.

Powers' (1987) elaboration of reproduction theory asserted that American schools reflect contradictory structural realities to students. He argued that schools maintained this ambiguous posture through the enactment of secular rituals which powerfully idealize possibilities for success and through the institutionalization of routines which, functioning as reality checks, lower students' expectations. Powers concluded that ambiguity resulted in students acquiring a "dual consciousness" wherein able, ambitious pupils settled for limited, low status occupations. Importantly, Powers asserted that this dual consciousness was one of the mechanisms which enabled an inequitable social order to retain its members' loyalty (1989).

I want to point out here that, though reproduction theory is based primarily on data from class societies, I will employ it, as others have (see Levinson and Holland, 1996), to understand both the class and status differences in Melanesia. Nonetheless, it is important to heed Sykes' caveat with regard to its use in Melanesia: While Bourdieu's definition of class is concerned with how structured difference is reproduced, his theory contrasts with research on group formation in Melanesia - where class relations are mediated by wide-ranging and more or less egalitarian kinship networks. Moreover, Sykes points out that Bourdieu's reproduction theory does not account for student resistance or school failure (see Sykes, 1995).

Therefore, while I will retain reproduction theory's perspective on the role of schools in maintaining social structure, I will heed Sykes' caveats on the complications of applying Bourdieu's theory to Melanesia and his omission of student resistance and school failure. Accordingly, I next consider the ways in which students may actively contest formal schooling processes.

## Cultural Production and Reproduction

Given epistemological shifts in the social sciences, there have been more analyses recently offered of how the experience of students in school are shaped not only by structure and power but also by their own creative responses. These shifts and their implications were powerfully articulated by Giroux in his proposed dialectical treatment of subjectivity and structure. He said researchers must

> ...understand more fully the complex ways in which people mediate and respond to the interface between their own lived experiences and structures of domination and constraint (1983, p. 108).

Importantly, Giroux's theory regarded student resistance as a response to the educational system rooted in political and moral indignation, not psychological dysfunction. This perspective was consistent with the new "practice" theory which was beginning to appear in anthropology (Ortner, 1984). The approach considered people's active attempts to shape their own lived experience (agency) within structural and cultural constraints, and contrasted with an older model which had actors' behaviors determined by these constraints.

In the late seventies ethnographies began to appear which shattered the image, implicit in reproduction theory, of the passive, malleable student. In his well-known study "Learning to Labor," (1977) Willis showed that students could create cultural forms which opposed the hegemony of the school. Willis introduced the notion of "cultural production" to describe:

> The active, collective use and explorations of received symbolic, ideological, and cultural resources to explain, make sense of and positively respond to "inherited" structural and material conditions (1983, p. 112).

Willis used this construct to show how the structural position in the labor market of one group of students (the "lads") was mediated by their own counter-school peer culture: They believed that their chances of getting a job through academic success were so slim that it was not worth sacrificing a good time for appropriate behavior in school. Thus the lads themselves were an important part of the reproduction process, and in another way

as well in that they celebrated a masculinity which was inherent in manual labor. Willis's work is also significant for the study at hand because it described how communication behavior in school reproduced the class relations of the larger society.

I next turn to Foley's work on education and social and cultural reproduction - to show how students' agency may be constrained by structural forces. Like Willis, Foley's (1990) focus on interaction in his youth-centered ethnography of a high school in South Texas was a highly sophisticated integration of critical theory and socio-linguistics. Foley asserted that socially prominent youth in the town were able to learn a communicative style which, through "situational speech performances," enabled them to manage their impressions and manipulate school authorities. These students played "making out games" in which they sabotaged lessons while simultaneously convincing teachers that they were the real workers in the class. Foley pointed out that most students from the Mexican historical speech community were not able to learn this communication style and did not attain a high measure of academic and socioeconomic success. However, he showed that some of the predominantly middle-class Mexican students were able to learn it and went on to assume prominent positions in the community. Thus Foley demonstrated that, within the constraints of the South Texas class and racial power structure, some students could exercise agency in "learning capitalist culture." In a similar fashion, I will focus on interaction and use the important tools of cultural production and agency in the analysis of student culture in Manus.

I want to point out here that peer[7] involvement is implicit in these notions of student culture and cultural production and reproduction in high school. Researchers in Western and non-Western cultures have found that peers play a major role in shaping students' attitudes, values and actions with regard to education (Coleman, 1961; Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Bosse, 1994; Shaw, 1996). Like Willis and Foley's work, these studies indicate that peer cultures can circumscribe a powerful school ideology for students. They generate their own notions of success and desirable identity and determine the extent to which schooling is commensurate with them.

We should keep in mind that, while Manus has a history of inter-village friendships based on trade, these unentailed friendships in high school are new social forms, and the work they do has gone largely unstudied. We will see in chapter 7 how these friendships provided students with affective support and social networks with which to work through their approach to high school and their struggles over who to be.

Thus, theories of cultural production and reproduction, and research on the role of peer involvement in the production of student culture, form the starting point for my analysis of student academic engagement in Manus.

## Identity and Academic Engagement

I next turn to how issues of identity formation also affect students' approaches to school. In this section I discuss recent work on identity formation in anthropology,

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[7] I use this term to refer to friends and relatives, though distinctions will be made between them in later chapters.

ethnopsychology, and critical education studies which have been used to illuminate student academic engagement in educational contexts characterized by cultural disjunctions and power disparities - both of which are present in Papua New Guinea. This body of work shows how these issues affect assent in learning: Specifically, how students' identity dilemmas, which arise from structural constraints and cultural disjunctions, shape their investment in schooling. Thus in this section I describe work on cultural conflict between home and school in the areas of knowledge, identity, and social relations. The section points out that in order to reinforce their sociocultural orientations, both teachers and people in a students' home community may imbue these domains with moral character.

Kohl recently pointed out that for the analysis of student academic performance it is vital not to confuse a "willful refusal to learn [with] failure to learn" (1994, p. 20). Research in cross-national contexts has shown that this refusal to learn can be embedded in student dilemmas over identity - especially where there is large cultural distance between home and school (Gibson, 1982; Dehyle, 1986; Phelan et al, 1993; Fordham, 1995; Rival, 1996). For the Melanesian context at hand we must bear in mind the anthropological work cited above on how identities have been changing there. Particularly, we must consider how people are experiencing greater subjectivity and choice in the formation of their social relationships and thus greater responsibility for self-creation.

To do this, schools must be seen as social fields (Terrell, 1996) where student identities are negotiated, contested, and constructed. This process of self creation is

partially shaped by aspirations which are formed in the schooling environment and in the popular media which is accessible there, and by perceived life-chances which are made apparent in the school's competitive environment. The process is also shaped, however, by a student's home cultural resources (Foucault, 1988). The linguist Joshua Fishman commented eloquently on the dilemma facing many students in developing countries:

> The quest is for modernity... and authenticity, simultaneously, for seeing the world, but "through our own eyes," for going to the world, but "in our own way" (1976, p. 73).

Thus it is important to consider Levinson et al's point that implicit in many students' struggles concerning identity is a conflict over the valuation of knowledge between home (village) and school - a conflict, indeed, over what constitutes an "educated person" (1996).

In fact, prior research in Papua New Guinea has demonstrated that these issues of conflict over knowledge between home and school bear consideration. The work of Lindstrom (1990) and Sanders (1989) has demonstrated differences between indigenous and Western cultural assumptions about the production and uses of knowledge. Waldrip and Taylor (1995) concluded that enculturation into what might be called a Western school view involved an implicit devaluation of students' traditional world views and village lifestyles. Bosse (1994) found that students in national high school struggled on a subjective level to integrate the opposing norms of their home and school cultures.

In a more finely-grained treatment of this problem of the in-school conflicts over knowledge, Fife (1994) wrote that through a hidden curriculum, Papua New Guinean teachers promote a moral order which privileges the abstract knowledge common in the

more individualistic urban-centered formal economy over the more communal practical action-oriented forms of knowledge characteristic of the rural-based subsistence economy. Teachers emphasize the importance of being correct, implicitly celebrate town life, and continually demonstrate their position as authorities who can make moral judgements about students' behavior. Importantly, Fife argued that for many students from village homes, this was their first taste of what life would be like if they pursued a job in the cash sector - where "good" workers are rewarded and "bad" workers are punished. Finally, Fife pointed out that this valorization of urban values over rural ones in schools set up a situation, similar to that which Powers found, where a vast majority of students and their relatives were likely to become disappointed with their future lives.

Home and school conflict may also involve differences in the way in which social relations affect personal identity - especially given the degree to which Papua New Guinea persons locate themselves in a social matrix. Moreover, Sykes (1995) pointed out that in Papua New Guinean schools, the system of examinations ultimately creates hierarchical class divisions, which contrast with the loosely egalitarian social fabric of many students' home villages.

We should also consider the effects of conflicting models of personhood (for both males and females) which are implicit in students homes and schools. Social change in Papua New Guinea has caused initiation rituals, which previously played vital roles in "making" men (Herdt, 1982, 1987), to virtually die out. [8] In lieu of these ritual

[8] Indeed, Mead reported that once Pere boys and girls reached puberty, they became the focus of elaborate rites. These were marked by ceremonies, feasts, taboos, and exchanges between their parents' lineages. Girls would spend the 3-4 years between their

initiations, schools have become sites for socialization into a different kind of personhood. In another article, Fife (1995c) argued that a new model of masculinity which differed greatly from the traditional model was introduced during the colonial period primarily through schools. The traditional ideal model was characterized by a "personal forcefulness" or ability to shape events in a significant way. Those who failed to become this kind of man were traditionally know as "rubbish men," seen as dominated, ineffective, passive, and relatively nonaggressive. Interestingly, Fife asserted that to become successful in the new colonial world, men had to assume many of the characteristic behaviors traditionally ascribed to the rubbish man (some of which were outlined above in Fife's hidden curriculum). He further pointed out that though quite a few men in independent Papua New Guinea have been able to acquire a bureaucratic or capitalistic forcefulness, the conflict between the two models remains salient for many young men.

While female Papua New Guinean youth face similar challenges with regard to gender socialization, theirs are further complicated by the changing position of women in the country. Sykes (1995) built on much of the rich literature on this topic in her concise treatment of the role of schools in the gender politics of Papua New Guinean women. She argued that while village performances of customary events literally make people

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puberty ceremony and their arranged marriages primarily in their homes as a "much inhibited spectator to life" (1930, p. 189). Before the colonial administration came and outlawed intertribal raiding, boys would spend the time after their pubertal (ear-piercing) ceremony preparing for war. Later, with the financial backing of a male relative, they would be married, perhaps move with their wives into an uncle's house, and would begin the arduous process of repaying their debts.

into male and female, schools socialize boys and girls into new, formal gender hierarchies. Furthermore, she documented how national teachers often unwittingly reify these new hierarchies in their well-meaning attempts to "maintain good social order" (1995, p. 347).[9]

Clearly these tensions involving knowledge, social relationships, and identity between students' home and school worlds pose dilemmas for students (Phelan et al, 1993). The next section describes the cultural resources students may draw on as they negotiate these cultural disjunctions and power disparities in schools.

## "Moral Communities:" Resources for the Production of Self and Culture

A starting point for gaining an understanding of how Papua New Guinean students define themselves as members of groups is provided by Shaw (1994), who recently underscored the moral importance of student's indigenous cultural resources for identity formation. Shaw used Kleinman's (1988) conception of "local moral worlds" - communities whose symbolic boundaries are largely determined by the shared status positions of their members relative to other groups. Shaw began with the premise that identification with this moral community is fundamental to one's sense of identity. Moreover he stressed the importance of interaction in this process - how people send signals through style, gesture, and taste. In describing the "symbolic unity of moral communities" Shaw argued that

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[9] See Tawaiyole, forthcoming, for important research on female high school students' perceptions of job opportunities.

> ...people signal their subject position through their identification with a particular local moral world - a community whose symbolic boundaries are largely determined by the shared subject position of its members in relation to other status groups (1994, p. 111).

He stated that because these signals are based largely on tacit understandings of perceived life-chance differences between status groups, loyalty to these local moral worlds has a dual function: It both anchors identities and reproduces status hierarchies. Moreover, people in these moral communities actively contribute to this process. For example, Levinson et al (1996) demonstrated that unschooled people or dropouts in students' home communities may produce identities or practices against the schooling enterprise and the formally educated person it is said to create. Indeed, in the autobiographies of well-educated Papua New Guinean writers collected by Weeks (1977), three different Papua New Guineans described enduring pressure from their age mates in their natal villages to either leave school, disobey school authorities, or reduce their effort on their schoolwork.

I will use the notion of moral communities to understand the content of counter-school cultures produced by students. Shaw demonstrated this approach in his analysis of Willis's lad's motives and the culture they produced. He said that the lads were willing to sacrifice power and prestige in order to

> ...sustain loyalty to a moral community and local moral world that exists only as long as it opposes the larger society and is distinguishable from it (1994, p. 103).

Thus students whose moral communities may have some kind of oppositional orientation or ambivalence toward academic success may experience "fear of identity loss" in school

(Ogbu, 1990). They may seek to distinguish themselves and their moral community through in-school resistance and the production of counter-school cultural forms. These cultural forms both question the relevance of school for their own futures, and may unwittingly reproduce their own status. I will use this model of identity development, then, to partially explicate the motivation for, and specific character of, cultural production in Manus high schools.

## Research Design and Methods

### Research Design

The project was designed as a multi-site case study (Marshall and Rossman 1995) in order to understand the cultural settings of Manus villages - where most Manus High School students come from - and the town of Lorengau, where three of the four provincial high schools were located. I especially thought it would be important to live in a village for a period of time because it seemed likely that villages would important reference points for students. I lived in Pere village, on the southeast coast of Manus, from October, 1994 - March, 1995.

In late March, my wife and I moved to Lorengau, the provincial capital (about one hour away by speedboat), and resided there until September, 1995, though we made frequent trips between the sites throughout the study. In Lorengau I conducted ethnographic research in two out of the three high schools located near the town. I had originally wanted to included Papitalai High School in the qualitative portion of the study, as it had been, over the last six years, the best high school in the province (as

indicated by its students' performance on the Grade 10 SCE). However, as Papitalai was located approximately 40 minutes from the town and we were unable to find housing near it, I decided to focus on Manus High School, a government-administered school, and Ecom High School, a mission-administered school, both of which were located in or around Lorengau (I describe the schools in detail in Chapter 5). I wanted to focus on two high schools for the purpose of generalizing the research findings across contexts and, if pertinent, to study the effect of administration type. My pattern when conducting the high school portion of the study was to spend four consecutive days in one high school, spend a day on data management and transcription, then spend four consecutive days in the other high school.

I made frequent trips between Lorengau and Pere throughout the study, both to attend important events, such as school graduation and sailing races, and to maintain relationships with informants. As I show in the next section, the research design included collection of both qualitative and quantitative data in both sites.

## Data Collection

In Pere, I observed and interviewed (informally and with schedules) community school students, sixth-grade and tenth-grade "pushouts," high school students home on holiday, parents of community and high school students, and adults in the community who made their living through subsistence activities. In addition, I observed lessons at Pere Community School and interviewed teachers, headmasters, and past and present Board of Management members. My wife and I also collected household census data

from the entire village on population, migration, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment (see Appendix C). I also administered a short questionnaire to the students in the sixth-grade class of 1994.

In Lorengau, I observed one ninth- and one tenth-grade class in each of the two high schools under study over a six month period. At both schools I spent the first two months observing ninth grade classrooms (9m at Manus; 9b at Ecom), and the second three months observing tenth grade classrooms (10p at Manus; 10b at Ecom). I made this shift for two reasons: 1) I wanted to learn about how grade ten students were preparing for their upcoming School Certificate Examination; and 2) I found that the students in the 9m class at Manus High had not reached a degree of comfort with me that allowed me to ask questions of them freely - they were still enormously shy around me. There were several students in the grade 10 classes in the schools, however, including one boy in the Manus High 10p class whose parents were from Pere, who welcomed me into their class and seemed willing to spend time with me.

I spent time with and informally interviewed students in these and other classes both in and out of school. I also conducted formal scheduled interviews with 38 grade 8, 9, and 10 male and female students at both schools both individually and in small groups. In addition, I interviewed teachers, administrators, Board of Governors members, Provincial Education Department officials, and parents in Lorengau.

My interviews with students and ex-students were conducted in a mix of Tok Pisin and English. I found that at the beginning of the study many students shied away from me, because they had never had a social conversation with a white person before,

because they were afraid their English was not good enough, and, as I discovered toward the end of the study, they were afraid their friends would ridicule them for speaking with me.

At the end of the study, I administered a student questionnaire to 320 students in grades 7, 9, and 10 at the two high schools under study (See Appendix C). This questionnaire included both forced-choice and short answer items. I also collected all available achievement data for the students in the questionnaire sample.

## Data Analysis

Observational and interview data were analyzed through a process of analytic induction (Pelto and Pelto, 1983; Huderman and Miles, 1994) which included componential, domain, and thematic analysis (Spradley 1980). During this process I used The Ethnograph - a software program for the management and analysis of qualitative data.

Student questionnaire data were analyzed using frequency distributions, chi-square tests, and tests of independence. I used the Statistical Package for Social Scientists for the analysis of this data.

## Limitations of the Study

Primary limitations of the study included the paucity of female students' voices in the qualitative data and the absence of standardized test results with which to accurately measure student effort.

The unequal representation of the voices and experiences of female students in equal proportion to those of male students was due to the difficulties I encountered in trying to establish informant relationships with the former. Indeed, it was difficult for even an engaged young man like myself to be alone (even for an interview) with a young single girl without arousing suspicion from her or others that I was interested in her as (another) wife. This difficulty became clear to me early on in our stay in the village when, after the Pere Community School Graduation in December, 1994, I tried to interview a girl in the sixth grade class who had not been selected for high school. She was sitting on a log and listening to a radio with two of her older cousins when I approached. I greeted all of them, sat down, and asked her if I could ask her some questions about what she was going to do now that she had finished community school. She did not answer, and looked down at the ground. A full minute went by. I then said, I understood if she was shy, but I just wanted to talk a little about some of her thoughts about what she was going to do now in the village. Again, no answer. Another minute went by. Then she abruptly got up, ran down the beach, and disappeared into a house. In all honesty, this event discouraged me quite a bit in my attempts to understand the perspective of female students. I made other attempts throughout the study to establish informant relationships with girls and while I occasionally had some success, the girls never opened up to me to the same extent as the boys. This limitation is partially compensated for by the inclusion of girls' responses on the Manus Student Questionnaire.

Another limitation of the study is that I did not have student standardized tests available to make accurate judgements about academic effort. Standardized tests were administered to grade 10 students towards the end of the 1995 school year, but I was unable to obtain those data. Thus, as I explain in chapters 6 and 7, my assessments of student effort are made from my own observations, attendance records which I kept myself, and interview data.

## Conclusion

This chapter has provided rationales for the study, sketched a theoretical framework for the interpretation of its data, and described its design, methods, and limitations. In the first section I reviewed the role of education in the development of Papua New Guinea, the grade ten "bottleneck," plans for secondary expansion, and the current situation in Manus - where implementation of an "Education for All" policy has coincided with a marked decline in Grade 10 performance on the national School Certificate Examination. This decline, I suggested, led the Manus Assistant Secretary of Education to request research into factors within the student culture, and, thus, to this study.

In the second section I discussed how considerations of structural constraint, identity, interaction, morality, and cultural production constitute the lense through which I will examine this issues. In the Manus context, student academic engagement is largely contingent upon the outcome of a struggle over school-based versus home-based knowledge, identity, and relations between the self and others. Much of Manus students'

valuation of school-based knowledge, according to the habitus outlined by Otto, is related to the efficacy of knowledge, or more specifically their perception of how school learning can lead to work and remittance. According to Fife, the valuation of this knowledge has historically been reinforced by the morally-imbued pedagogical authority of teachers. However, as I shall show, the shrinking opportunities in the formal sector and the nationalization of the teaching staff have eroded the pedagogical authority of teachers.

I will argue in this study that this development, along with students' own perceptions of the shrinking job market, and their identity dilemmas involving increased subjectivity and responsibility for self-creation, led to the production of anti-academic cultural forms in Manus high schools. In the previous chapter I noted how people in villages may valorize and partially construct aspects of their own culture in attempts to establish worth in contexts of disparate power. This chapter explicates how these constructions may be imbued with moral weight, and suggests that they may also be invoked as a vital resource for self-creation by students who are struggling with the valuation of school-based or "village-based" knowledge, aspirations, and identity. I will try to show that this "moral community" can function as a reference point which, through friendships formed in the social field of the school, can motivate and shape the production of an anti-school student culture. This student culture, following Shaw and Willis, contributes to the reproduction of students' status and the perpetuation of inequality.

# CHAPTER 4

## PERE VILLAGE: A CRUCIBLE OF AMBIVALENT EDUCATIONAL ATTITUDES

### Introduction

In January 1995, I was walking back through the middle of Pere in the heat of midday. I had just interviewed a retired teacher in the far western settlement when my friend Pwendrilei Pondraken hailed me from his veranda. I returned his greeting and, upon seeing him gesture, changed course, and climbed up the steps to his porch.

Pwendrilei was 38, married, and the father of 5 children. He had a community school education, a few years of work experience in town, and political aspirations - he was then serving his second year as the new Chairman of the Pere Community School Board of Management. He was an important person for me to know, and his gregariousness and ready smile made it always pleasant to converse (TP: "stori") with him. Earlier in the month some youth of the village had vandalized one of the school classrooms, and I had been wondering whether the Board would effect repairs before the 1995 school year began, the next day.

Once on the porch Pwendrilei gestured for me to sit down. He was seated with his back to his house enjoying the view of the lagoon, reef, Bismarck sea, and offshore islands beyond. We exchanged pleasantries and he asked where I had been that day. We caught up, then I trepidatiously asked how the repairs to the school were going. He said obliquely that the Board would have to assess its budget and what kind of repairs it could

afford to make. Then he leaned forward and leveled his gaze at me. The smile disappeared. He said:

> I have these words I want to say to you. In Manus, school has reached the limit of what it can do for the people. The road of the school is blocked. This kind of knowledge, it has reached its end. So now, we cannot go forward any more, we cannot go right, we cannot go left, so we must REVERSE [emphasis his]. We must go back to the knowledge of our ancestors - the knowledge of the village. [He leaned further forward]. Mark these words of mine... Life is good here in the village.[1]

I asked him why he felt this way, and he elaborated:

> PNG is in a financial crisis. It's very hard to get a job. This is part of the reason. We must teach the ways of the ancestors in school. We have reached the end of our school knowledge (Fieldnotes 1/26/95).

Pwendrilei's talk echoed the thoughts of many men and women in Pere during our stay there: Many adults were responding to the rising educational credentialism and inhospitable job market in the country by questioning the value of investment in formal education, adjusting themselves to lifestyles which required a minimum of money, and valorizing a partially "invented" village-based identity.

In this chapter I aim to explain Pwendrilei's statement regarding the valuation of education by presenting descriptive data on these developments in Pere. I will argue that the gradual erosion of competitive exchange and collapse of the hierarchy it created had fostered a climate in which the power to determine status differences had shifted out of the village to migrant wage earners, and most people in the village now used subsistence

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[1] Here and elsewhere, quotations are identified by date. Conventions used when quoting interview segments are as follows:
* Brackets ([]) mark text that has been inserted for the purpose of clarification.
* Four ellipses (....) indicate that a segment of protocol has been ommitted.
* Three ellipses (...) indicate a pause in the dialogue.

activities primarily to feed their families - not to accrue a surplus for gaining credit or prestige through exchange. Meanwhile the paucity of wage-earning opportunities in the cash economy had (as Schwartz described earlier) leveled aspirations for personal material wealth. Indeed over the last 15 years it had become increasingly difficult to find cash employment in Lorengau and in other provinces (statistics follow).

However, continued remittances from wage-earning relatives and limited earnings from the sale of local fish have enabled steady consumption of modern goods in the village. This situation has meant that, though fewer people were earning wages in the cash sector, modern goods, such as radios, video screens, outboard motors, and soccer uniforms, were still used in the village by a great many non-wage earning people. I will argue that these parallel developments, and an unconscious feeling of a gradual loss of control over vital resources, have led to a revaluation of a constructed "tradition" in the village, which contains both "traditional" and modern features. Over and over again people in Pere told us, "Life in the village is good. Better than town." I will emphasize that these were rational responses by Pere villagers, given their perceptions of constraints which were shaping their lives.

I will show that the decreased wage-earning opportunities, presence of modern goods in the village, and revaluation of "tradition" have led to an ambivalence in the minds of many Manus adults about the extent to which investment in formal education can help them. Villagers were acutely aware of the decrease over the last nine years of the number of Manus grade 10 graduates who went on to further training or found cash employment. Some of them even cited unemployed graduates from the University of

Papua New Guinea. This situation discouraged parents with regard to the utility of formal education. I suggest that this was a rational response given the Manus' habitual way of thinking about efficacy of knowledge cited in the previous chapter. I show that this response was manifested in many parents' detached (and fatalistic) approach to their children's school careers and to their own investment in the school itself.

Thus, in this chapter's first section I present essential information about the physical and social environment of the village. Then I discuss village economic life, including the range of socioeconomic statuses, the ongoing role of remittance and cash in the village, and the continuing viability of the local subsistence base and newly reintroduced bartering system.

I then discuss some of the relative valuations Pere villagers made between village and town life, subsistence and wage labor, and Melanesian and White identity. I do this partly by discussing the return to the village of adults who had worked in the cash sector previously. These adults had either quit or retired early - primarily to come back to the village, make claims to clan-owned land, and build houses on it. They said life was "easier" or "better" in the village than in town. I argue that these sentiments formed part of an invented and valorized village identity which was a means to maintain worth in an increasingly marginalized context.

Then, in a roughly chronological fashion, I present observational and interview data on the status of education in Pere in 1994-95. I include the voices of parents with regard to the value of schooling, and their heterogeneous approaches to supporting the efforts of their children in school. I also present descriptive data on educational practice

at Pere Community School, which, in 1994, placed close to the lowest percentage of grade six graduates in high school in the entire province. I also describe the lifestyles and some of the aspirations of students in the sixth-grade class of 1994. I show that while there was a variety of aspirations in the class - some students wanted to stay in the village and work, while others wanted to go to high school and find cash employment - the students who wanted to leave the village hid those aspirations, primarily so they would not betray the valorized "tradition" being constructed there. I describe the events around the 1994 school graduation, and finally, trace developments at Pere Community School during the 1995 school year which further demonstrate the ambivalence of village adults with regard to the return of formal education.

## The Village Setting

Pere village in 1995 was located on a peninsula of the southeastern side of Manus Island in the Bismarck Archipelago, at three degrees south latitude. This was actually the third documented location of the village since Margaret Mead's first field trip in 1928.[2]

The village affronts the Bismarck Sea and is protected by an extensive coral reef and broad lagoon, each of which are home to unique species of marine fauna and flora. The peninsula is volcanic and sandy and presents few opportunities for agriculture. As part of the larger Titan group of coastal peoples, the Pere villagers are historically coastal

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[2] At that time the village (Pere I) was situated on several small islands in a lagoon to the west of the current location. During the 1940s the village moved onto the westernmost tip of the peninsula (Pere II). Later on, in the 1960s, the village moved farther east to the center of the peninsula to its present location (Pere III).

fishermen and employ a variety of traditional and modern fishing technologies. They also trap mudcrabs in the mangrove swamp behind the village. They pride themselves on their fishing skill: One Titan living in town told us, "When god made the Manus, he gave the Titans a slightly bigger brain, because he knew they had to be extra clever to catch the fish!" The Pere Villagers get their primary carbohydrate, sago, by making hour-long trips in their canoes to swampy sago grounds where they process the pulpy trunks of these palm trees. The peninsula itself also offers plentiful coconuts and betelnut, and a few enterprising villagers have also established limited vegetable gardens high on the plateau behind the village.

Population, Social Organization, and Custom Work

At the time of our village census, the population of Pere consisted of 340 females and 365 males, living in four major clan-divisions over the length of the peninsula. In 1995 major clan affiliations still dictated parts of social life. For example, villagers still resided patrilocally and went fishing or cut timber in the jungle in areas which were owned by their clan, with members of their patriclan. If they wished to use another clan's maritime or land-based resources, they asked, and permission was usually given. While marriage had traditionally been arranged on an exogamous basis, these practices had become rare. Young people often said they were free to make their own choice of marriage partner (though their parents wouldn't necessarily agree). This was a contested area.

Though Paliau had discouraged large custom work (TP: "kastomwok") exchanges, advising people to use their resources to improve their material life, custom work was still extant during out stay - primarily as funeral exchanges.[3] At these exchanges (Titan: "Nrin") traditionally a complex web of roughly commensurate exchanges of food and money would be effected between the members of the mother's and father's lines. Gewertz points out (personal communication) that the cosmological significance of custom work is becoming increasing irrelevant, and that they have less and less to do with "custom" - a point we will return to later. Indeed, village elders were increasing lamenting the fact that these exchanges were being treated as business opportunities by other men. One elder said,

> Some of the time people will bring one kg. of rice, and they will make a claim to K100. He is trying to make money. It is business (Fieldnotes 2/14/95).

This elder called these people greedy and commented that frequently these exchanges made people angry because they were worried they were not getting enough. Sometimes as much as K6,000 was exchanged at these ceremonies. Brideprice payments were significantly higher and of larger concern to Provincial Officials. The Assistant Secretary of Education expressed his frustration at parents not paying outstanding school fees and depriving his department of money and equipment to improve educational facilities. He explained:

> And do you know where the money is going? Kastomwok. That's where the money is going instead of school fees. Kastomwok, brideprice, the

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[3] As in much of the rest of Papua New Guinea, custom work has been reduced to life crisis rituals (Gewertz: Personal Communication).

> payments go up to K20,000, K30,000. The higher the price, the more prestige for the parents. So when parents come in and say they can't pay school fees, I usually ask, "did you have a kastomwok this year?" Because that is where their money is going.

A few more progressive elders advocated ceasing these large payments, and the Assistant Secretary for Education had proposed to the Provincial Assembly that a cap of K10,000 be put on brideprice. His motion was greeted with mixed emotions, and no action was taken during our stay.

## Political and Religious Institutions

This section sketches the social organization, political and religious life of Pere villagers, as these domains will form a backdrop for some of my later assertions about social change and education.

For political representation, Pere was combined with Mbunai - a village 400 meters across a lagoon to the east. Political leadership was still based largely on clan-based blood ties to ancestral leaders - especially successful warriors. One retired school inspector in Pere, who had an array of ideas about how to help the village negotiate the difficult path between traditional and modern worlds, disclosed to us that he could never be a member of the community government because he did not have the correct blood line. Other leaders (such as Pwendrilei, the President of the Pere Community School Board of Management) were elected largely on the basis of their oratorical skill. And indeed current leaders invoked both modern and traditional authority - including their power to curse as a social sanction.

People in Pere spent a great deal of their time, energy, and resources on religious activities. There were two active churches in Pere at the time of our residence: Wind Nation (TP: "Win Nasen"), a continuing institution of the Paliau Movement so thoroughly documented by Schwartz (1962), attended by 32% of the population; and the more modern Evangelical Lutheran Church (which had an electric public address system), that had seen a recent increase in the number of its members - it was attended by 60% of the population. Four percent of the population went to the Catholic Church in Mbunai, and later in our stay, other villagers jokingly confessed to belonging to a third church, the "SNL" or "just hanging around church" (TP: "stap nating lotu"). Thus while introduced institutions such as community government and churches connected villagers to the nation-state and to a broader community, more traditional bases for social life, such as clan membership, custom work, and oratorical skill, remained important.

## Village Economics and Subsistence

### Socioeconomic Differentiation and Sources of Income

I will contextualize the following description of village economics and subsistence in current labor trends in Manus and Papua New Guinea as a whole, in order to demonstrate the decreasing availability of wage labor for people in Manus Province. In Papua New Guinea total formal sector employment rose from 193,500 in 1971, to a peak of 220,000 in 1988, and, by 1991, following the Bougainville secession, dropped to below 200,000. Moreover, since the labor force was expanding annually on an average of around 35,000 in the seventies, and by 45,000 in the eighties, the informal sector had

absorbed approximately 800,000 individuals of working age by the beginning of the nineties (Gupta, 1992). In Lorengau, between 1980 and 1990, the number of wage earners had decreased by 1.2%; while the number of unemployed in the town had increased by 21.7%. The overall population of the town has increased by 1.0%. Thus while the population had remained virtually unchanged, the proportion of economically inactive people living in Lorengau has increased significantly since 1980 (Manus Census 1990).

When we first arrived in Pere we were struck by the variety of lifestyles we saw there. Our census data indicated that there was a range of socioeconomic statuses in the village. The relative wealth of households was determined by: 1) the wage-earning history of its occupants and occupants' relatives; and 2) their own industry at selling maritime or locally produced perishable goods. Houses themselves were a reliable measure of household income. They were either "bush material" (made with carved wood and bamboo frames with sago leaf or tin walls and roofs), or "permanent" (frame-style dwellings made from imported timbers with fiberglass or tin walls and tin roofs). Permanent houses were generally owned by people who either had held jobs previously, or had relatives (most likely children) who had paid for them. They were generally seen as the most desirable houses, though many young people said they would be happy with a bush material house of their own. At the time of our census, there were 27 permanent houses in the village, and 109 houses which were made from a combination of tin and thatched sago leaves. Some of the (permanent) houses had some kind of electric power

(through either generator or a solar panel); and wealthier families had fiberglass 19 or 23 foot speedboats, with outboard motors.

Villagers valued goods such as 40-horsepower engines for these boats, new radios and cassette recorders, soccer shoes, and kerosine lanterns. Those who could afford them through their own saved wages, or through remittances from a working relative, purchased things like these for use in the village. Moreover, some entertainments from town were brought to the village for consumption there. During our stay two different families erected outdoor movie theaters by hanging sheets from clotheslines, and showed videos on t.v. sets which were powered by generators (I will return to this below). As one teacher marveled, who had grown up in Pere and had just returned after 18 years of teaching in another province,

> Even I myself, am really surprised to see the big changes in here... It's changing because most of the things in the town are brought to the village you see. It's right here (Fieldnotes 12/5/94).

Though most of these goods were available only to those whose close family members had jobs, it is important to mention that many others could use (or experience) them through a small cash payment, or through the preferential system of social obligation known as wantokism.[4]

Actually, though, Pere villagers needed little ready cash on hand for their minimum needs. They needed some to buy more-or-less vital goods like: nails, fish hooks and lines, kerosine, soap, salt, sugar, radios, batteries, and a limited stock of non-

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[4] Swatridge has described wantokism as "friendly society, welfare system, and life-assurance all in one" (1987, p. 127).

perishable food (in case stormy seas prevented fishing), and school fees. While many villagers received remittances of some amount from relatives, or through customwork to help them with these cash expenses, others had to rely on the sale of local fish or sea cucumbers. Indeed the new lucrative market for sea cucumbers in town had led to a return to a clan-based maritime tenure of fishing grounds west of the village.[5] In addition, more and more people did not follow the traditional custom of giving part of a catch to any person that greeted their incoming fishing canoe - they increasingly either took their catch straight to their house to be smoked for later sale, or to town to be sold immediately. In the town market, two men with a good day's catch of tuna brought home an average of K80.[6]

Thus, while Pere villagers had varying amounts of steady income from remittances or sale of resources, most generally had enough both to purchase necessities like the ones above, and to occasionally use or experience modern "luxury" commodities. Importantly, the largest socioeconomic differences between households were usually determined by whether or not a relative was working in the cash sector. This situation meant that much of the power of determining status differences between people had shifted away from the village. As we shall see below, the village subsistence base, which

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[5] In pre-colonial times access to these grounds was governed by a clan-based system of maritime tenure similar to the one on Ponam described in Chapter 2. During the Paliau Movement, however, these restrictions were relaxed, and people could fish more or less where they pleased. However, with the new lucrative market for sea cucumbers in town, these grounds had once again become rigidly divided by clan, and fights and court cases had frequently occurred due to breaches of these arrangements.

[6] At the time of our research one Papua New Guinean kina was worth approximately 85 U.S. cents.

had previously played a vital role in the exchange system which created status differences, was now used more or less solely to feed individual families and to provide small amounts of cash through sale of maritime resources.

## Subsistence

I will argue that the traditional subsistence base in Pere, which continued to be viable in 1995, maintained village pride of place and figured in the valorization of village identity. Families used their subsistence activities to provide food for themselves and for barter, rather than to accrue a surplus which could be used in exchange to gain credit or prestige.

Indeed, Mead reported a precedent for this kind of lifestyle in 1928. She said that at that time not all men in Pere were overly concerned with their performance in exchange and the prestige it would gain them. In addition to those who due to infirmity or other limitations would continue in a position of dependence and subservience to an established leader, she described another group of men who would

> ...step out of the round of exchange and become independent fishermen with no ambition beyond providing for their families... Their childrens' marriages are either provided for with a minimum of ceremony or become pivots for some leader's activities; but they themselves do not become heavily involved. They continue to fish every day and go to market to trade their fish for other food. Their houses are small and unpretentious. They have made subsistence and not success an ideal. (1937, pp. 225-226)

With the exception of the leader's involvement in their children's marriages, this description could serve for many Pere families in 1995. In addition, villagers remarked frequently to us on how generally poor economic circumstances had fostered a

widespread frugal attitude in the village. These comments were usually preceded by a phrase like, "because now, it is hard to get money," or "now, people are interested in money."

In 1995 the prevalence of people who shared these circumstances on the south-east coast led to the reinvention of a pre-colonial bartering market with the Titan's traditional trading inland trading partners. This market occurred ever week, and almost instantly become immensely popular. Every Thursday Pere fishermen would leave the village in their canoes in the "big morning" - around 4:00 a.m., pole their canoes west-south-west to the best fishing grounds, fish with either hook, net, or spear-gun for 4-5 hours, then, ideally with a rising westerly wind, put up sail and cruise the kilometer or so distance to the market at Nohong. While some fish and vegetables were held in reserve for cash sale only, most of the exchanges at the market were made on a strictly barter-system basis. The proprietor of the market, from an inland town, was very aware of the benefits of the market in these difficult economic times, and expressed these at the beginning of each marketing session in his announcements before the communal prayer. The market had also taken on the additional cachet of a social destination for young people where they could meet peers from other villages.

Thus in 1995, Pere continued to have a viable subsistence base which villagers could rely on to meet most of their needs for sustenance and shelter. These practices seemed to take on moral significance as people intimated that having to pay money for things was "bad", and being able to find or make things from locally available materials

was "good." The next section describes how this subsistence base figured in a valorized village identity in Pere.

## The Valorization of Village Life

### "Hia, Mi Boss Bilong Mi" (Here, I am My Own Boss)

People in Pere in 1995 made frequent comparisons between village life and town life. Implicit in these comparisons were valuations about identity in the two contexts. Pere villagers had a range of "modern" and "traditional" tastes and aspirations, and complex layers of identity. However, most likely due to stultified employment opportunities, we consistently detected in these statements a certain valorization of village-based identity - much of which we suspected was derived from the ongoing productivity (and independence) of traditional subsistence technologies mentioned above, and a need to establish worth in the increasingly marginalized village context.

We heard most of these statements from adults who had returned to the village after having previously held jobs. They had either quit, retired, or had been fired, and had come back to the village because: 1) A relative had died and they had to maintain a claim to family land (usually by building a house); 2) Life was "easier" "better," or "safer" in the village than in PNG's urban centres; 3) If they did not have a job, less was expected from them for customwork; 4) They were their own boss in the village, and did not have to follow (western notions of) time; 5) They did not need alot of money to live in the village. We will see that these adults' statements valorizing village life were

echoed by villagers who had never worked outside the village - and thus had become part of the invented village identity I am concerned with in this chapter.

For example, Marshall Joseph had worked in the elite Riot Squad of the Police for 8 years, stationed in Rabaul. His boss wanted to transfer him back to Manus, but Marshall told him he could transfer him ANYWHERE but Manus, because of the heavy burden of custom work that working in his home province would entail. His boss refused, the two fought, and Marshall was fired. Now living in the village with his wife and three small children, Marshall commented on the difficulties of being a wage earner in one's home province, and on the appeal of traditional village life:

> Marshall: The public servants in the provincial government - plenty of them there, they don't have a passbook at the bank. Every fortnight [payday], all their wantoks come, they all come and call out, give a little money for this, or this, or food, and whatever. It's no good.
> PD: So here, it's all right?
> Marshall: The village is good. There's no boss. Me myself, I'm my own boss. Suppose I need fish, okay, I'll go get fish. Suppose sago, okay, I'll go. So here, I'm free.
> PD: And you don't need alot of money?
> Marshall: That's RIGHT [emphasis his]. You don't need alot of money in the village. A little bit, that's all.
> PD: So you're happy to be living in the village?
> Marshall: Yes, I'm happy (Fieldnotes 5/26/95).

Other men made statements which similarly extolled village life. The next day I was returning to our house when Marshall passed by with his in-law (TP: "tambu") Kusunan Paniou. Kusunan was a Pere man who had lived in the village all his life. In his late 30s and with no education beyond community school, he provided for his wife and three small children on a subsistence basis. The two of them had just come from the sea and were both carrying sailing and fishing gear back to Kusunan's house which was

set back about 300 meters from the shallow water on the other side of the village soccer field. They or their relatives had made virtually all of their gear themselves from local and store-bought materials: hand-carved booms and mast, paddles, poles, and six-foot long rubber tube-powered spear guns. They also carried diving masks and the small ubiquitous Manus bags hung around their necks which no doubt contained their betelnut, pepper, lime, cigarettes, matches, and other necessary sundries.

I asked them where they had gone fishing and they said along the reef to the west. Since the previous night I had talked with Marshall about how he felt about living in the village, I asked Kusunan the same question. He immediately put down his fishing gear, stood up straight, and said,

> The village is good - better than town. Here, I don't have a boss on my back. I am my own boss. If my family needs food, okay, I can go to the saltwater. I know how to get food. I know how to find it. If my family needs a house, okay, I can build a house. Everything is right here [gesturing to the sago swamp behind the village], and I know how to build a house. I have this kind of knowledge (Fieldnotes 5/27/95).

These quotations from Marshall and Kusunan extol the independence, self-reliance, and lighter burden of kastomwok associated with village life in comparison to life in town. It is interesting that Kusunan, who had never worked for a boss, cited in the second quote the fact that he did not have a boss on his back as the primary reason the village was better than town. He was using the comparative evaluation of Marshall and other returned workers in his own valorization of village life.

Moreover, we saw considerable evidence that villagers celebrated the fact that, in the village, they could do things differently than people living in towns. The resolution

of a dilemma facing the village soccer players further illustrates this dynamic. Typically the young men of the village gathered in the community area at about 4:30 in the afternoon when the sun was weakening to play seven-a-side soccer. Whichever team scored first would remain on the field to play the "next seven", and those waiting to play would continually form teams of seven to take on the winners. However, a problem was developing whereby players seemed to be intentionally prolonging games by missing easy shots - so that they could stay on the field longer. One day the situation reached a boiling point when one game took 40 minutes, and hardly anyone else got to play before darkness fell. Many players were mad and frustrated, and gathered to air out possible solutions. One man suggested putting a time limit on each game, say seven minutes; if there was no score after that interval, both teams would come out. Marshall Joseph, a boisterous leader of the group, said immediately, "Forget it! Time is something which belongs in school! We don't have to follow time here!" (Fieldnotes 1/16/95). Thus while soccer itself was an imported game from the West, the players were consciously adapting it to what they felt was appropriate for the village life which they were, in a sense, inventing.

Sentiments like these arose in other settings as well. One day in August as I was passed out of sight but within earshot of the Wind Nation church, I heard the Chairman exhorting the congregation,

> This is not the white man's place! It is OUR place, the Manus peoples' place, that's all! So we must look after it well! Tomorrow morning, all you young men and women must come for cleanup (emphasis his; fieldnotes 8/30/95).

Moreover, some village adults said they did not want their next community government president to be some one who did not have "knowledge of the village," who did not work in the village. One man said,

> Pomat Paliau (a big Pere lawyer in town and possible candidate for the position) - he has knowledge of paper, but he doesn't have alot of knowledge of the village (Fieldnotes 5/28/95).

Melanesian and White Identity

Pere Villagers also constructed notions about racial differences which implicitly extolled their village-based identity. The following conversation with some of my fellow soccer players in the village illustrates locally-held ideas about white people and Melanesians:

> (Beside the soccer field during community work). This was a breakthrough for me: conversing in almost all Tok Pisin with about 15-20 young men. Most of the questions came from David, Joseph, and Guy - all married with young children. Joseph and Guy had gone to high school through grade 10. As Joseph was coming over he made a loud joke for all to hear - that there were alot of grade 10 leavers there whom I was talking with, but they were afraid to speak English with me because theirs wasn't good enough. We stood next to the field for about two hours and talked about many things. One of the most interesting was Joseph's response to my question about white and black identity:
> PD: So, I have a question for you. The other day I saw two men walking by my house and I heard one say, ribbing the other, "Yu mweyap (Titan: "white man"), yu white man, mweyap." (I jabbed Guy Samol in the ribs to demonstrate). So I know this is joking (TP: "tok pilai"), but what does it mean? Why do you say this?
>
> (There was a pause, but many quick exchanged glances and knowing smiles. Then Joseph nodded).
>
> Joseph: Okay, it's like, plenty people here, we don't think white people can go fishing, or build a house, or beat saksak. You know, do really hard work. So, like Guy here, he doesn't go fishing. He just stays in his house

all day. So I can joke with him and say, "Oh, yu mweyap." Because we think, you know, white people just sit in their offices all day, and they do business for their work - they don't do really hard, physical work like us. So, like if a man here is a businessman, like Pokayou (who owned a successful tradestore in the middle of the village), you can joke with him, and say, "Oh, yu white man." Or if a man goes off to live in one of the (urban) centres, and then he comes back, and he is wearing shoes, and socks up to his knees, and pants, and shirt and a necktie, and he walks around the village, people will say, "yu mweyap."
PD: Food too? Suppose a man here usually eats biscuits, and Twisties (Cheetos), and ice cream, you can say this?
Joseph: Yeah, or suppose a man smokes cigaretts, like... Benson and Hedges. If he smokes those, people will say, "you white man." Because here, we smoke simoks or tabac like Medal or Spear (long low grade cigarettes rolled from newspaper).
PD: And if he goes to high school?
Joseph: Yeah, getting white man's knowledge, you can say it (Fieldnotes 3/6/95).

This exchange illustrates how Pere villagers construct some of the traits associated with village-based and Western identities. I became very familiar with the typology as I did physical labor with the men ("Easy, easy Peter, it wouldn't be good if you hurt yourself and Ellen gets cross with us"); and played soccer with them (they were surprised a white person would do a chest trap.)

I want to emphasize that while these evaluations may not have been held by everyone (some young people, as we will see, had aspirations to be businessmen or pilots, and not to have to do hard physical work in the village), these were the identity constructs (stereotypes) which were ostensible on the surface of village dialogue, and thus comprised part of this somewhat nostalgic reflexive view of village life.

In addition, visible pride in village skill or knowledge was frequently evident. One day soon after we arrived in the village I was watching my adopted father (TP:

"lukout papa") Karol Matawai, a master canoe carver, gently hammer some sharpened hardwood stakes in a crosshatch pattern into a six foot long outrigger float, which had been soaking overnight in the lagoon. The stakes went in easily and would later be attatched to the outrigger frame extending from the canoe itself. There were two other men watching, and I asked if they used glue to keep the stakes from coming out of the outrigger. Karol smiled, and Allan Kondi, one of the men watching and probably the joliest man in the village, reeled with laughter and repeated over and over, "No glue, Masta! No glue!"[7]

Inventing Tradition in 1994-95

As a part of this valorization of village life, the people of Pere (and the Manus in general) were self-consciously promoting their subsistence and sailing technology. The open-member for Manus had put up a total purse of K5,000 for a traditional sailing canoe race from Pere to Baluan in December of 1994 - a distance across the open ocean of 39 kilometers. This was the equivalent of the cultural "shows" which occur frequently throughout Papua New Guinea and are intended to preserve and display Papua New Guinean Ways. One village elder, who had recently retired from his school inspector position, said during an organizational meeting for the race,

> Having sailing races like this is important, because it is our tradition, our pasin. We must continue to do things like this because they are our tradition. Today most of our children don't end up going off to (motioning towards mainland Papua New Guinea) tertiary schools. Most of them end

[7] "Masta" is a derivative of the term "master" used in colonial times in the address of Australians, Germans, and other white people. It is still often used.

> up coming back to the village. But - they don't know what to do. They are not learning our traditional ways, like how to build our sailing canoes. We must teach them how to do these things (Fieldnotes 11/07/94).

These concerns led to a series of "culture workshops", two of which occurred during our stay. These were intended to provide a public forum to teach some of the skills necessary in canoe carving. Turnouts were between 15-25. The organizers repeatedly expressed concern that youth were not learning these skills. These issues are taken up in more detail later in the chapter.

In this section I have tried to show that in 1995, largely in response to circumstances in Papua New Guinea which were making it more difficult for villagers to gain employment and material wealth, Pere villagers were making claims to an invented traditionality in order to maintain a degree of control over those in towns. In the next section I explore how these social processes were related to parent's attitudes toward education, and the ways in which youth in the village grew up, went to school, and began to form their own identities and aspirations

## Discouragement about Educational Investment and the Decline of Pere Community School

In the preceding section I have attempted to describe how the shift of status-producing resources away from the village, the continued viability of the village subsistence base, and efforts of Pere villagers to maintain worth were leading to a valorization of a partially invented village-based identity. In this section, I argue that in addition to these developments, the shrinking opportunity structure for grade 10

graduates was leading many Pere adults to be uncertain about the extent to which formal education, with its decreasing rates of return, could help them. This was a rational response given their habitual epistemological stance regarding efficacy of knowledge mentioned in chapter 2. In this section I elucidate the educational processes in Pere village in 1994-95 which demonstrate this ambivalence.[8]

Accordingly, I first describe the experience of the sixth grade class of 1994 - a class which placed one of the lowest percentages of graduates into high school in Manus Province. I describe the effects of parents on student engagement and argue that though most Pere parents wanted their children to go to high school and get jobs in order to help them in the future, there was heterogeneity in the extent to which parents actively supported the schooling process. I also discuss the aspirations of the sixth-grade class of 1994. I show that there was a variety of aspirations in the class - some students wanted to stay in the village and work, while others wanted to go to high school and find cash employment. However, I argue that the students who wanted to leave the village hid those aspirations, primarily so they would not betray the valorized "tradition" being constructed there. Finally, I trace developments at Pere Community School during the 1995 school year which further demonstrate the ambivalence of village adults with regard to formal education.

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[8] Therefore, in this section I do not seek to explain actual educational outcomes - which are determined by a multiplicity of factors including intelligence, school effectiveness, and parents' educational attainment. Rather, I want to show how parents' and their children's investment in school and aspirations were affected by their perceptions of the educational and occupational opportunity structure.

## The Sixth Grade Class of 1994

Pere Community School opened in the early 1950s and was located in the northwest corner of the village. The Papua New Guinea schooling calendar operates in accordance with the Australian system: Schools generally open in late January, early February, and close in early December. To accomodate demographics and limited teacher availability, village schools like PCS commonly operate only 3 alternating grades per year. Thus in 1994 the school had grades 2,4, and 6, and those in the latter were preparing for their examination which would determine their entrance into high school. As recently as the early 1980s PCS had been one of the best community schools in Manus. Of the sixth grade class of 1990, all but five had been selected for high school. Of the sixth-grade class of 1992, 11/19 had been selected.[9] In this chapter I will describe the factors that led only 8/27 students to be selected from the sixth-grade class of 1994 - a result which I will argue further discouraged parents with regard to the value of educational investment.

The condition of the school itself reflected this decline in educational performance. As in many Papua New Guinean communities, it was located a distance from residential areas. It consisted of two classroom buildings of two classrooms each (one of which contained the frame of a proposed library), a headmaster's house, and two teachers' houses. The headmaster's house and one of the teachers' houses were extremely broken down and vacant at the beginning of our stay - the head and teacher had elected to

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[9] Because of personnel changes in the Department of Education, community school examination results for the last 5-10 years were not available.

live in the village instead of on school grounds as per government regulations. The school grounds also included a dilapidated basketball court, small soccer field, and boys' and girls' latrines built over the lagoon to the east.

When we arrived in Pere in October, 1994, the sixth grade class was in the middle of preparing for the high school entrance examination. For several reasons, however, this preparation had been far from ideal: This sixth grade class had had a succession of teachers who had not given them opportunities to ask questions in class - they typically came in the morning, put the assignment on the board, and left. Their fifth grade teacher had gotten pregnant and been frequently absent. Their sixth grade teacher's (also the headmaster) wife had had a long illness and died in the middle of the school year, causing their teacher to be away from the school for nearly two months. Parents eventually arranged to have the fourth grade teacher teach the sixth graders.

There was variation in students' reactions to this inconsistent instruction and in their overall approach to school. More motivated students, often under their parents' supervision, did their homework diligently amid their own suspicion that they were missing out on important parts of their education. Other students took advantage of their freedom to enjoy village life.

Indeed, aside from their obligations in school, community school children were for the most part free to play as they pleased - like the children described by Mead in 1930. Community school children took part in virtually all of the favorite entertainments of youth in the village. They commonly took small canoes to sea to play, swim, or surf out by the reef, or made their own model canoes to race in occasional organized

competitions. Card playing, usually for small amounts of money, was also common and the subject of occasional admonishment from church authorities. Soccer, volleyball, and netball were all popular games, and for much of our stay a twelve team soccer association (8 for men, 4 for women) was the focus of virtually all attention over the weekend (a few sixth grade boys played, but at their own peril - one had his leg broken). School children would also commonly take walks through the village to visit friends and relatives: As in so much of PNG, a primary form of entertainment was conversation.

There were also imported entertainments from town. Virtually all the children had an older wantok or friend with a radio or tape recorder, and on these they played a variety of popular music - favorites included Reggae, Michael Bolton, Christian Rock, and Irian Jaya pop. As I mentioned earlier, at certain times of year it was also fairly easy to see Western movies. Nearly every night over the Christmas holiday, one of the wealthiest families in the village rigged up a home theatre with clothesline and suspended blankets as walls and showed double features on their t.v. and videocassette recorder. They charged 30 toea (approximately 30 U.S. cents) for adults, 20 toea for children, and 10 toea for students. The activity was very popular, and approximately 40 adults and 60 young people attended each night. The most well-liked films generally featured action or kung-fu. Some community school boys told me that they had seen the Manus man's all-time favorite movie, Rambo, six or seven times. (They frequently asked me, "He is so strong. Do you know him? Is he really that big?"). Thus community school children generally had little responsibility outside their classes and a variety of options for play and entertainment - some imported from town.

Parents' Assessments of the Return from Schooling

In this section I discuss how Pere parents perceived investment in education in 1994-95. Enrollment figures were not available during our visit, but we estimated that between 80-90% of school-aged children were enrolled in PCS in 1994. This high figure reflected the low community school fees of K15 (approximately 15 U.S. dollars). The vast majority of Pere parents wanted, if possible, for their children to go on to high school and, later on, get a job to help them. High school fees were K400 for boarding students and K200 for day students. For the past several years, though, half of this amount had been subsidized by the National Governments "Free Education" plan. Though occasionally high school fees were raised through the sale of fish,[10] most commonly they were paid by a working relative. Generally, parents whose children were selected to go to high school found a way to raise the fees.

Parents' assessment of educational and employment opportunity was revealed in the striking similarity of responses to one of the questions on our village questionnaire. We asked parents of high school and community school students: "If you had your choice what do you want your children to do? Go to town and work? Or stay in the village?" The most common response by far was, "If he/she can finish school and get work, okay, that is good. If they can't, then they can come back here and help me. There is plenty of work here." This stock response is interesting for several reasons: 1) The conditionality inherent in it indicates parents' awareness of the uncertainty of their child's educational

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[10] Usually through large-scale group fishing expeditions involving an entire clan and a special net called a Lou.

success and efforts to secure employment; and 2) it signals an acceptance of the school leaver back into the village - partly for his/her labor.[11]

Interviews revealed that the primarily younger parents whose children made up the bulk of the enrollment of Pere Community School seemed more likely to believe that the road of education was "blocked," as did Pwendrilei. And while they continued to send their children to primary school, their overall investment in the process was minimal. This was a typical pattern in Papua New Guinea: Parents regarded schooling as the work of teachers and usually saw little reason for themselves to get involved: It was the teachers' job to enforce discipline and foster learning. One Pere mother, who had lived in another province, elaborated on the narrow role village parents defined for themselves in their children's education:

> Many parents have the attitude, just send the child to school, and leave it. But parents are the first teachers. But, some have this kind of thinking, education is the work of [school] teachers, that's all (Fieldnotes 4/4/95).

As such, even though the sixth-grade at PCS had had a succession of underperforming teachers, most parents did not take an active role in the life or improvement of the school, and did not impose curfews for their children or supervise the completion of their

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[11] This valuation of adolescent subsistence labor was relatively new. Before European contact, post-pubertal boys did only "casual" work before they reached their twenties, as in helping in large projects such as sago thatching bees. In early colonial times, these boys would typically sign labor contracts and work outside of the village for 3-5 years. When they came back, they would be able to usually begin to do mens' work (Mead 1930[1975]). Girls, meanwhile made a more steady contribution to domestic labor - especially in looking after younger siblings. After the contract-labor period, however, these adolescent boys and girls began to play more of a role in contributing to their family's substance needs. Mead (1956) suspected that this situation would pose a dilemma for parents regarding whether their adolescent children would best be used for their subsistence labor or sent to school as potential wage-earners.

homework. In general, they had a detached approach and fatalistic attitude towards education.

Much of this discouraged attitude of Pere parents was related to their perceived monetary benefits of formal education (and thus was embedded in the Manus efficacy of knowledge habitus introduced in Chapter 2). One former community school headmaster said he thought people in the village didn't have as much "interest in school" now because of the large numbers of grade 10 leavers who, unable to get jobs or scholarships, had come back to the village:

> And the people here see this and think, well, if they can't get a job and help me, then what good is the school. That is the way people think here. School is for money (Fieldnotes 2/15/95).

This notion of education as a road to cargo (TP: "kago") has been well-documented (Carrier and Carrier, 1989; Swatridge, 1987). A medical technician who had returned to Pere for his holiday similarly remarked,

> ...Even now, people doubt the value of it [school]. Even Mary's [his wife, a nurse] mother in Ahus, who has a child in grade 8 going into grade 9, said, "why should I pay all these school fees when he's probably just going to come back here to the village after grade 10?" For HER (emphasis his) to say that, after seeing what education has done for the two of us, is very bad. Education here is in very poor shape if papas and mamas don't support it (Fieldnotes 1/7/95).

Several parents of successful students commented that not enough parents set rules for their children about studying and curfew and that they neglected the school itself - a subject I will take up in more detail below. Indeed, when asked if he felt the road of education was blocked, one elder who had sent several children through to high school scoffed and said,

> It is blocked with what? There is something wrong in the village, between parents and citizens. They are not interested for their children - to build up their community school.... But why are they leaving it like this, falling to pieces. They must have something wrong between teachers, board of management, and the parents (Fieldnotes 2/14/95).

Thus while most parents wanted their children to go to high school and find employment, they were discouraged about the likelihood of this happening. They continued to exhibit a detached approach to the everyday running of the school, and had a fatalistic attitude about their children's academic success.

## "I Want to Live in the Village:" Preparing for a Life of Subsistence

Most children in the sixth-grade class of 1994 were implicitly preparing themselves for lives in the village. This assertion is supported by the results of a student survey administered to the sixth-grade class in Pere Community School in November, 1994. The students were asked, "When you are an adult, like Miss Konabe (their teacher) or Mr. Demerath, if you could choose, where would you like to live - in the village, or in town? If you could choose, what would you like to do there? Why?" A startling 23 out of the 24 students present that day in class (out of a class of 27) replied that they would want to live in the village. The one boy who said he wanted to live in town to "find work" was the evangelical pastor's son - who was not from Pere and had lived in town before. I learned later, though, that some of the students in the class had hidden their aspirations of wanting to live in a town and have a "modern" job, such as being a pilot, from their peers and others in the village, whom they were afraid would ridicule them. I will discuss this hiding of aspirations more fully below and in chapter 7.

Nevertheless, a critical mass of these sixth-grade students did have aspirations to stay in the village, and these, combined with teacher permissiveness, created a classroom environment which was not conducive to learning. Students were frequently late, did not complete homework assignments, and copied classmates' work. They brought bushknives to class and acted out frequently (throwing stones and rubbish). Mathias Sori, an elder Pere man who had served as Chairman of the Pere Community School Board of Management throughout the 1980s said that in previous years, he hadn't seen homework, school papers, and written assignments lying about on the ground of the village, but in the last few years, he had. Moreover, while in previous school years there had been a bell rung at 9 o'clock to signal lights out for students, this practice had become erratic. Late in the 1994 school year, the sixth grade teacher confessed to me that she could not control her students. She said that when she questioned students in her class whom she encountered roaming around the village late on school nights, their response was usually, "it's my wish" (TP/Titan: "laik e yo"). Some parents expressed the same frustration and said that children had become more "bikheted" (rebellious). Several parents said that now the young boys "don't listen to their parents." We will return to these quotations later as evidence of a developing personal subjectivity in Manus youth.

I next present brief descriptions of two Pere boys, neither of whom aspired to go to high school and whose parents had more or less accepted this fact. They contrast, however, in the degree to which their parents were preparing them for life in the village.

Francis Allan[12] was the second of the three sons of Allan Kondi and Nyandros Popot. Allan had completed grade 6 at Pere Community School and described his daily work as fishing, helping other men build houses, and doing god's work - he was an elder in the evangelical church. Nyandros was doing her grade 9 at Manus High School when her father got sick and requested that she return to the village. She described her work as cleaning the house, finding firewood and sago, cleaning clothes, and taking care of the children. The family lived in a sago thatched house. Francis's older brother, Pomat, finished grade 6 two years earlier, but was not selected to go to high school. He was described by other men in the village as a "raskal" and was suspected of having stolen certain goods in the village. Having no child-remitters, the family made its living entirely from subsistence. It supplemented this with small cash earnings from selling smoked and fresh fish at the markets at neighboring Mbunai and in town.

When asked the question on our village census about whether he wanted his children to go find work in town or in village, Allan was one of fewer that five adults in the village who answered in favor of the latter:

> I want them to be here in the village and work with their mother and father. I don't want them to live in town (HH Survey #138).

Francis's class rank at the end of term 3 was 13/27, and he responded to my in-class survey that he wanted to live in the village so he could "looked after my father and my mother, for what they want me to do." However, Francis's parents were doing little to prepare him for this life in the village. He did not have his own canoe to use, rarely went

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[12] A Pseudonym; selected names in this dissertation have been changed in order to protect informants' identities.

fishing with the men of his clan, and spent much of his free time roaming around the village - often playing cards for small amounts of money. He and his older brother were later implicated in the vandalism episode at PCS recounted below. Francis was one of the youths in the village that adults worried about. His parents were not providing structured support for him, and he was thus free to do, for the most part, as he pleased - some of which caused trouble for others.

A contrasting example was Popot Posin, the eldest of the five children of Posin Molean and Kumaut Keyai. Posin had gone to high school, and worked for a brief period of time in town, but now, like Polau, was a subsistence fisherman and an elder within the Wind Nation church. Kumaut had completed grade 6 at PCS. The family also lived in a sago house. Kumaut said she wanted Popot to get cash employment.

Popot was a tall boy, and one of the few sixth-grade students who garnered respect when he played soccer with the men. At the end of term 3, his class rank was 19/27, and he said when he was an adult, he wanted to live in the village. The appeal lay in:

> Going fishing, hunting, watch the people making canoe, playing near the house, washing in the river, playing with another boy.

He said he wanted to do these things "Because if I'll go big is easy for me to do those things." During his sixth grade year he had begun to do some of the heavier work around the village. Moreover, his father had carved a canoe for him to use as he pleased, and Popot was beginning to make a contribution to the family food supply.

I believe this group of parents and their children formed a critical mass in the village with regard to the utility of education. While they surely valued the potential remittances which education and employment could bring, their confidence that this would occur was diminishing. This sentiment - that they would most likely have to fend for themselves - fueled their own valorization of village life. To varying degrees, this was an implicit part of their childrens' ideological socialization.

"In My Heart I Want to Go to High School:" Striving for Educational Success in Pere

The number of parents who actively supported education in the village - through encouraging their children (or relatives' children) to study hard and behave in skul (TP: "skul gud"), and setting rigid rules for their childrens' behavior - was small. These parents tended to be motivated by their own income expectations, their number of children, and ideas they had about satisfactory lives for their children. If parents did not have a child-remitter they might push their oldest to do well in school. Moreover, they might not expect as much academically from another younger child, and in fact might want that child to stay in the village to look after them. This would be related to parents' own income expectations - while most parents had few expectations for imported material goods and were seemingly content to make do on a primarily subsistence basis with small cash remittances or earnings, as we will see below, there were some single mothers in the village who were in particular need of help, and they were some of the most assertive in supporting their children's efforts in school. Finally, a small number of highly educated parents who had worked and lived outside the village wanted their

children to do well and go on to high school primarily so they could experience the wider world and have a more interesting life. They felt that though their children would find the village entertaining for a few years, they would eventually get bored, frustrated, and regret not being able to see the wider world.

For example, Nyalawen was the mother of several very successful students in Pere. She had gone up to grade nine at Manus High School and had then worked out of the province for several years. In 1994 her four oldest children were all in secondary school - including her second youngest son, Thomas, who was in the eighth grade at Manus High School. Her youngest son, Jim, was in grade 6 at PCS. Nyalawen was the only parent of the dozen I interviewed in the village who said she had explicit rules for her child in school. After school, she required that Jim come directly home, and after resting a little, spend 30 minutes studying, and, if he had them, to ask her questions about his homework. But, she said, it was hard to get him to study because of "disturbances" like "village traffic." By this she meant the constant comings and goings of friends who commonly enticed her children to go away and play. Mathias Sori explained how these "disturbances" worked:

> Okay, suppose you are a school student, and I am your friend. When you came to your house in the afternoon, when school is finished, I say, "Peter, let's go swim. Let's go to the saltwater! You can't do your homework now. Let's go!" So they go. Plenty of students, they go around the village and follow the ways of the young men who don't work or who don't go to school (Fieldnotes 5/28/95).

Nyalawen said she was "worried" about education in the village and felt that the poor employment situation had led many parents to adopt a detached or "leave it" (TP: "larim") attitude with regard to their children's schooling.

On days when the teacher said she was too sick to come to school, Jim was one of the students who went to the teacher's house to ask her if she had any work to give them. Jim's class rank was 10/27, and he said he wanted to stay in the village because he would like to "do things to help my family and the community", and because he thought it was "good to work like this and live like this." Though his father had died earlier, Jim frequently went fishing with the men who lived near his home, and, though he did not have his own canoe, he often borrowed one to go fishing himself.

The final two students I describe here were cousins and lived in the house of my adopted father, Karol Matawai. Margaret Matawai, named after Margaret Mead, was the youngest of Karol's seven children. Her oldest brother was a major in the PNG Defense Force in Moresby and her next oldest brother was a fisheries inspector in Lorengau. While her oldest sister had been selected for high school after grade six, Karol had held her back to look after him in the village. Meanwhile, his next oldest daughter, Pikawas, was in grade 8 at Manus High. Karol wanted Margaret to go to high school too, so she could help his family also. Margaret was one of the best students in the 1994 sixth-grade class. At the end of term 3, her class rank was 2/27. Like virtually all her classmates, she reported on the in-class survey that she wanted to live in the village when she was an adult:

> To go fishing, beating sago, making garden, selling food... Because it is easy to find food there.

However, Margaret later disclosed to me that she did want to go to high school (though when I asked her why she was too shy I respond).

Naso Kanamon's father was a paternal half-brother to Karol Matawai. Naso had moved in to Karol's house in the middle of 1994, both to obtain some freedom from his own parents and to protect his cousins, Margaret, and her older sister, Kiteni, from repeated attempts at rape. Naso's father, Kanamony, and mother, Chimolen, did the same subsistence and domestic labor as the other parents above. To the question of where they wanted Naso to live in the future, they responded, "either way." Naso himself was a good student (10/27), and, though he indicated on the survey that he wanted to live in the village in the future (for the same reasons as the other boys), he later disclosed to me that he felt a keen desire to go to high school and to pay back his parents' hard work. He also told me that Jim wanted to also (though Paliau was too shy to tell me so in our interview). Indeed, both Naso and Margaret received frequent encouragement in their school work from Karol Matawai's children and spouses - many of whom had gone to high school and worked. One uncle whom we will meet again in the last chapter, Paliau Pokiap, constantly exhorted them to "think about the future" and do well in school so they could go on and make interesting and productive lives for themselves.

In this section I have tried to show that there were a small number of parents and children in Pere who were striving for academic success. Nyalawen was the only parent out of the dozen I interviewed who actually enforced rules for her child in school.

Moreover, she was worried about the state of education in the village and was critical of the "leave it" attitude of most other parents. Jim, Margaret Matawai, and Naso Kanamon, all indicated on their in-class survey that they wanted to live in the village after community school. However, interviews revealed (with the exception of Paliau) that they all had a hidden desire to go to high school (and, as we will see in later chapters, experience life there). I suggest that they hid this desire so they would not appear to betray the village-based identity being constructed and valorized in the village.

1994 School Graduation

I return now to our account of schooling practice in Pere in 1994-95, and describe the 1994 school graduation. The 1994 sixth-grade class sat for its exam during two days in mid-November. Two weeks later I learned from Provincial Government Education Officials that only 7 out of the 27 Pere students had been selected for high school. An appallingly low number which placed Pere in the bottom decile of community schools regarding the percentage of students selected. Neighboring Mbunai had 6 of its 9 sixth graders selected. Meanwhile, The Board of Management made elaborate plans for the school graduation ceremony, including the purchase of gifts for superlative students, food for all attending, and the printing of a program.

The graduation ceremony was held in the community area in the center of the village on Dec. 7, 1994. It was a dramatic event held under threatening skies. The 27 grade six students, unaware at the time of the results of their exam, sat at their desks which had been brought from the school and arranged in a horseshoe facing the BOM

and teachers with the ocean beyond. Several board members were wearing ties, looking their best. Small trees had been temporarily planted behind the desk of each student. Some parents stood behind their child's desk. There were perhaps 100 or so people arrayed around the periphery to watch the ceremony. Ellen and I had each been asked to hand out a prize, so we were seated at the table with the rest of the officials and teachers. There were several speeches using a battery-powered megaphone, including a report on the school's finances, a description of the alternative "School of the Air" radio-based distance education program for those not selected for high school (which had failed in two previous years to become established in the village), and a short but impassioned speech by Kumalau Paniou, a member of the community government. This gifted orator, aware of the paltry number of students selected for high school, said there was no "wrong" in staying in the village: "To be in the village is GOOD! We here must follow the work of the community school" (Fieldnotes 12/7/94).

Then the sixth graders names were called, and one by one, they came forward to receive an envelope which contained their community school certificate and, if relevant, notification of selection. Two thirds of the way through this process, the rain came, and the operation moved into the adjacent Margaret Mead Community Center. Few could fit inside, and dozens of faces were pressed to the screens. After the certificates had been handed out, the board members at the front began to distribute presents to the students and teachers.

In stark contrast, I looked outside, and behind the many faces pressed against the screen, I saw Margaret Matawai's older sister Pikawas, with tears in her eyes. Margaret

was sobbing uncontrollably against the wall of the building. Later in the afternoon, I described the scene in my fieldnotes.

> I saw no other 6th graders or students around. Mercifully after 4-5 minutes of this awful display, an aunt came over, put her hand around her shoulders, and led her away, Margaret sobbing all the while against her shoulder.
>
> Meanwhile, the wives of the Board of Management were laying out plates of sausage and butter sandwiches, sausage, cake, and thermoses at what was previously the head table. I turned to Kumalau Paniou and said, "You should talk with Margaret because you made a very good speech during the ceremony." He said, "She should not cry. There is no reason to cry. She can stay in the village and work. There is plenty of work here. She can be happy here. I know, I am happy here. Look Peter, they are putting out the food. You like to eat some food, Peter? Drink some cordial? Ah, Peter!."
>
> Kumalau guided me over to the food table, where the only people standing around it were the board members [minus two teachers], the invited guests, some younger wantoks, and a couple of older men, who might have smelled a good feed coming. Of course I was urged to get my food first, so I took half a sandwich and moved to the side. Kumalau soon handed me a cup of lime cordial. I asked, "Where is everyone? I thought this was supposed to be a lunch for the students and their parents." "Oh, they have gone to their houses, they are upset. I could see it on their faces as they left the area. I know these people. These are MY people. This is MY village. Seven go and twenty stay. This is no good. This is why parents are upset. They will blame the teachers (Fieldnotes 12/7/94).

I soon left and went to try to make my condolences to Margaret. She was on the porch of her father's house being consoled by her aunts. I said I was very sorry about her not being selected, and one of the aunts said, "It's all right, it's all right, it's not a big thing!" Several days later, Margaret shyly admitted to me that she had wanted to go to high school.

Naso and I spoke the night after the Graduation ceremony, when he revealed to me that he had wanted, all along, to go to high school. Though we had gotten to know each other well, he told me this under cover of night (so, as per his wish, others could not easily see him with me). He spoke in hushed but (rarely heard) impassioned tones:

> PD: (I said this trying to lift his spirits) You told me in my survey that you wanted to live in the village)
> Naso: Yes, but in my heart (pulling on his shirt over his heart) I wanted to go to high school.
> PD: Go to high school then come back and live in the village?
> Naso: Yes. I want to have a plan, you know? To plan for the future - not just sit around like the other boys. Because my parent, they took care of me when I was little (Fieldnotes 12/7/94).

Naso elaborated on his feelings when we spoke a week later:

> I want to go to high school because I am the oldest in my family. I want to go - so I can do something to help my parents. Because when I was a small boy, my papa and mama, they took care of me. They would always find food for us. Even when the big wind came up - the big, big wind (motioning to the sea with a rising voice), my papa would still go out and try to find food for us. I think, that if it wasn't for my papa and mama, I wouldn't be alive today. So, because I am the oldest, I want to help them as much as I can. But plenty of boys here, they don't want to help their parents. They don't really care. They don't want to help them (Fieldnotes 1/16/95).

Later, Naso added that he also wanted to see "what high school was like" - a sentiment shared by many young people in Manus which I will take up in Chapter 6.

Other students, such as Francis and Popot, seemed relieved that they could finally get on with fitting into the daily routine of the village. Popot told me he was "happy" that he had not been selected and that he could continue learning men's work in the village.

After the graduation, the parents of students with good community school records who were not selected were, for the most part, upset - primarily with their teachers. For

two weeks after the selections were made, rumors circulated around the village that the Provincial Education Department had made mistakes in the grading of the exams and that actually more Pere children had been selected. While the rumors were true, it turned out that only one more had been selected - Margaret Matawai. Jim had been selected in the first batch to go to Bundrahei High School on the southwest coast. A few other parents made arrangements for their children to continue their education in other provinces where they could stay with relatives. During this time, Naso toyed with the idea of becoming a chicken farmer because he had heard that it was a good way to make money (it was becoming increasingly popular in town). At the end of January, though, he was sent on a boat to Madang Province where he could stay with an aunt and repeat his grade six to hopefully gain admission to high school there - which he ultimately did. One other high-achieving Pere sixth-grade student who was not selected - Ipau Tanou - was sent by her father, a highly educated ex-speaker of the Manus Provincial Assembly, to Madang where she stayed with an aunt and entered high school there. Thus 10 out of the 27 students in the Pere sixth-grade class of 1994 ended up going to high school.

I have tried show in this section that students in the Pere sixth-grade class of 1994 had a variety of attitudes, practices, and aspirations with regard to education. While most parents wanted their children, if possible, to go on to high school and get jobs in order to help them, there was great variability in the extent to which parents actively supported the educational mission of the school. Many of them, such as Allan Kondi and Posin Molean, likely fueled by their perception of an inhospitable job market, an uncertainty of the efficacy of education, and an ongoing valorization of a constructed

village-based identity, maintained a detached attitude towards their children's schooling. They prepared their children with varying degrees of effectiveness for a future life in the village. A small number of other parents, who had generally had experience of their own outside the village or who had relatives working outside the village, such as Nyalawen, and Karol Matawai, adopted rules for their children and actively supported their schooling. Some of these parents, like Karol Matawai, who had working relatives in other provinces, used them to find other schooling opportunities for their children or relatives' children who had not been selected for high school in Manus.

The situation of the students reflects the heterogenety of desires and identities which is characteristic of post-colonial Papua New Guinea. These students had an array of approaches to school and aspirations for their lives beyond it. I argue here that while some students, such as Popot and Francis, truly did aspire to subsistence lives in the village and had been socialized to a certain extent into the new constructed "tradition" of the village, the same climate made other students, such as Naso and Margaret, hide their aspirations to go to high school and find jobs in the "modern" sector.

## The Continuing Ambivalence About Educational Investment in Pere

The small number of students selected for high school from the 1994 sixth-grade class seemed to contribute to the uncertainty with which many parents (and the Board of Management) regarded educational investment. This ambivalence was evident in three areas: 1) The five-month delay in effecting repairs to the school after the vandalism episode over the Christmas holiday (discussed below); 2) An attempt to negotiate a

school fee level underneath that mandated by the Education Department of the Provincial Government; and 3) Parents' continued detached attitude towards Pere childrens' schooling.

My own questioning of participants led me to construct the following account of the vandalism episode: One day in early January 1995, half a dozen grade six leavers, including Pomat and Francis Allan, asked the Truancy Officer of the PCS BOM if they could take some coconuts from the PCS school grounds (though they did not tell him it was to make beer). The Truancy Officer said no. The boys became angry, climbed the trees anyway, got the coconuts, and threw several of them through the fiberglass walls of the school, and broke two blackboards. The boys were caught and given a brisk public talking to by the truancy officer. He said they would be held responsible for contributing the money necessary to effect repairs to the school. However, nothing ever came of this, and it was not until five months later that the BOM bought aluminum siding out of its own budget to fix the walls of the school.

The next vignette describes a Parents and Citizens Meeting in which parents publicly negotiated the monetary value of community school education and attempted to set a fee-level which was below that which was mandated by the provincial government. This meeting was held five days after the opening of the 1995 school year to introduce the new headmaster and to set the school fee level. The new headmaster, Birio Frisu, was an enormously talented and dynamic teacher from Goroka, who had married a Mbunai woman. Together, the two had taught in and around Manus (including Pere) for the previous ten years. Using the analogy of how the bristles of a broom only function

when working together, he urged the parents, board, and teachers to work together with him to improve the school. He concluded by saying, "If you dream of fish, you must also dream of school."

Pwendrilei, the Chairman of the Board of Management, next asked for volunteers among the parents to "look after" the school, to prevent another vandalism episode. This was the first time in the history of PCS that the Board had had to do this. Pwendrilei then explained that the Provincial Education Board (PEB) had mandated that the school fee for the 1995 school year had to be established between K20 - K50. The PEB was giving local community governments some leeway in the setting of the fee in acknowledgement of different economies of scale. One man promptly cited the difficulty of getting money in the village, and mentioned the value of the kina going down, the prices at Steamships (the primary store in town) going up, and the prices of tinned fish going up. K20 was too much. He proposed K10 for each students' family, regardless of how many students they had in school. This proposal was greeted with broad support, in the face of warnings from weary retired teachers that they would be breaking the law if they went below K20. A retired headmaster proposed K20 for each student, but then a father immediately suggested K15, because otherwise for his four children, he would have to pay K80. After another 20 minutes of debate, the K20 figure for each student was renominated, seconded, and passed.[13]

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[13] In addition, the Board of Management had to made several announcements to collect the K5 School Equipment Trust Account Fee for the 1994 school year. At the end of December, 1994, 34 of 92 students in school had not paid it, and the Board had to threaten to bar these students from the school the next year until the parents paid it (which they eventually did).

Finally, Pwendrilei went through a list of proposed regulations for the 1995 school year, including: 1) Every school night there would a bell at 8 when students should study, and at 9 when they should sleep; and 2) the school area would be off limits to villagers (to prevent further vandalism). Then Pwendrilei said, "Our skul is bush, I ask you, is it time to go clean up the school? I ask you now." A man next to me called out, "Don't ask, just say, go cut the bush!"

Then Kusunan Paniou made the most impassioned public speech about education I had yet heard:

> Many papas and mamas send their children to school. But they never go to the school. If they went to the school and looked, and saw that it is ruined, they would cry! Headmaster, [turning to Frisu], you should close the school until it is fixed (Fieldnotes 2/5/95).

Other men voiced their agreement, but the Chairman did not address the issue.

Frisu decided to keep the school open with the understanding that the Board and parents would fix the school building quickly. Despite his continued pleas to the Board, the building was not fixed for five months. Worse, the level of parental involvement in the life of the school did not improve. When I interviewed Frisu about the state of PCS at the end of August 1995, he lamented that only a tenth of the parents (who had all been invited) had come to the school's Education Week, designed around the theme, "Managing Resources for the Education of Young Children and our Young People" - a theme which had partly arisen from the fact that many people in the community had "borrowed" various tools and materials from the school and had not returned them.

When I asked if he could talk about how things had been going between himself, the parents, and the BOM, Frisu's normally positive banter took on a frustrated cant:

> So far it has gone well, but - I should say, not very well. Well, but not very well. Because there are all kinds of activities - Disturbances maybe. Board members, they tend to follow what is going on in the village, like with these kinds of activities - like funerals. Someone dies, and they want to arrange some customwork. So, all these kinds of things that happen in the village, they bring the board members out there, our maintenance, most of our maintenance was postponed. And when it comes to that day, something happens, again it's postponed, and, things did not happen the way they should happen (Fieldnotes 8/29/95).

Preparations for custom work in Pere in 1995 could take a great deal of time and energy, and it is possible that some parents felt that, while education was a possible route to gaining money, custom work offered a more likely return on their investment. Frisu found it especially discouraging that parents had virtually stopped coming to P+C meetings:

> It's really discouraging for me. (Before) I was in a school where when you call a P+C meeting, they are there. Education Week, they are here, making the program with me. But here, it's really sad (Fieldnotes 8/29/95).

This section has described a period of deliberation and ambivalence among Pere villagers over the extent to which they believe formal education will make a return on their investment. The detached attitudes of many parents, board members, and students was visible in the 1994 grade six examination results, the slow repairs to the school, the P+C meeting which attempted to negotiate an unlawfully low school fee, and the continued lack of investment in schooling throughout the 1995 school year. This

situation regarding formal schooling must be seen, however, in the context of continuing cultural change in the village.

## Conclusions

This chapter has described how Pere Villagers were responding to some of the social and economic conditions of contemporary Papua New Guinea and has focused on a newly emerging ambivalent attitude towards formal education. Primarily through remittances and limited cash-earning opportunities, Pere Villagers have been able to consume some imported products and media. However, a shift away from the village in critical economic resources, a need to maintain worth and a degree of control over those living in town, and the continued viability of local subsistence strategies have led Pere villagers to make claims to a somewhat invented traditionality or village-based identity.

I also presented evidence which showed the heterogeneous practices, attitudes, and motivations of both parents and students with regard to schooling in this context. I argued that Pere villagers' discouragement over the extent to which formal education could make a return on their investment - a rational response given their habitual way of thinking about efficacy of knowledge - has contributed to this invented and valorized traditionality. Students themselves had a variety of approaches to school and aspirations. While some truly did aspire to subsistence lives in the village, others hid their aspirations to go to high school and find jobs so they would not appear to betray the valorized traditionality being constructed by their parents, relatives, and friends.

The following chapters will describe how this climate of ambivalence over the value of education posed dilemmas for high school students - simply put, how, what, and whom they were to be. As such, they delineate how Manus high schools functioned as social fields: They were sites where students negotiated these and other dilemmas, and where a peer culture reflected and reinforced norms regarding student identity.

# CHAPTER 5

## INSIDE MANUS HIGH SCHOOLS: A CLIMATE OF ACADEMIC DISENGAGEMENT AND RESISTANCE

### Introduction

[The following exchange occurred during a midmorning recess/coffee break in the teacher's lounge or "staffroom" at Manus High School at the end of July. The staffroom consisted of a long low central table, with reclined chairs arrayed around it. It had gradually filled up with teachers and the headmaster, who were variously chatting, doing work, or making tea for themselves. Suddenly Phillip So-on, who had originally taught at Papitalai High School, but had spent the last twelve years teaching in Popendetta and had just come to MPHS in May, raised his voice above the din.]

PSo-on: [Sharply] Mr. Headmaster, what are we going to do about student absenteeism here? I just spent the last three periods running down students who should have been in my classes. There are only five or six in my class, and 20 or 25 roaming around, going down to the creek, or up the mountain. And the grade tens, they don't stay in dorm five or six [the grade ten dormitories] - they go and hide in other dorms, or go to the creek, or the mountain. The students - they are just not coming to class.
Head: I know, I -
Pso-on: [Cutting him off] And I would like to know what you and [nods upstairs to indicate the assistant headmaster] are going to do about teachers staying away from their classes. Many just sit here in the staff room, drinking their coffee, or reading the newspaper, when they should be in class.

[There was a stunned silence. About 15 teachers were in the room. Then the Headmaster and Assistant Headmaster -who had just arrived- made subdued statements encouraging teachers to go to their classes and to follow up on students who were absent] (Fieldnotes 7/21/95).

* * *

[In the middle of May, I ran into a young teacher named Mr. Posa during evening study. He had just come to Manus at the beginning of the school year after teaching in Port Moresby for two years. We had been having an

ongoing conversation about the differences between Manus students and his old students in the capitol.]

Posa: I am the duty teacher this week, and I can't understand why the students are not doing their homework. There are three duty teachers, and we go around at night study, and we go to a classroom to get the students to study, but when we leave, they just start to talk again. So they just end up talking for two hours.
PD: Are they doing their homework?
Posa: Well, that is the problem. They are not doing their homework. I do not know why. That is part of the puzzle, ah? Like I told you before, I came here from Moresby, so this is still new to me (Fieldnotes 5/4/95).

* * *

We are not serious about our studies. We have a casual attitude about our studies.

[Ecom High School grade 10 student, two months before the national grade ten examination] (Fieldnotes 8/1/95).

These statements illustrate the climate of academic disengagement that existed in two Manus high schools during the 1995 school year. Student absenteeism and lack of academic effort were major problems at both Manus and Ecom High Schools, and teachers and administrators struggled to deal with them. This chapter presents evidence of student disengagement from schooling and resistance towards school authorities. Chapter 6 attempts to illuminate these processes by linking student explanations with some of the theoretical perspectives offered in Chapter 3. It portrays these student behaviors as rational responses, given their own critique of the educational and employment opportunity structure after grade 10 and the fact that the vast majority of them could go back to their villages after high school and make their living from village economics.

This chapter is divided into two major sections. In the first part, I lay the groundwork for this discussion of student disengagement by describing the high school environment in Manus. Accordingly, I sketch the town of Lorengau, where the principal high schools are located, because the diversions there were important components of student life. I then offer summaries of the populations, history, curriculum, schedules, rules and physical conditions of the two schools under study. I conclude the section with a discussion of teacher practice in the two high schools and show how it contributed to student disengagement in the two schools.

In the second section I document academic disengagement and resistance in the two schools. I begin with student absenteeism and typical forms of truancy. I then describe the anti-academic classroom climate in Manus and focus in particular on how issues around English language usage contributed to this atmosphere. The chapter goes on to describe the study habits and homework practices of low-achieving students. This section elaborates how students subverted the educational mission of the school through: 1) "Making out games" (Foley, 1990) in which students gave the impression of learning and work with a minimum of effort; 2) using wantok relationships to intimidate teachers and break school rules without getting caught; and 3) active resistance. As I will show, this resistance ranged from subtle messages of disrespect towards teachers in classrooms, to small-time vandalism of school property, to the mob-like student beating of a Manus High School teacher in June, 1995.

## The Structures, Routines, and Teaching Practices of Manus High Schools

### Lorengau

Lorengau, the provincial capital of Manus, is located along the southern coast of Seeadler Harbor (see Appendix B for map). In 1990 it had a population of approximately 5,820 people living in mostly permanent material houses in several neighborhoods spread along the main east-west paved road (1990 Manus Census). It had a large open air wooden market in the middle square where fishermen from the coast and gardeners from the interior came to sell their fish and produce. It also had several churches, including Win Nasen, Seventh Day Adventist, Evangelical Lutheran, and a huge new glass, steel, and fiberglass Catholic "cathedral." Over the last five years, the town had seen an expansion in the number and size of shops and especially in the variety of goods available. In 1995 there were four major supermarket/ department stores, including a flashy new Papindo store which staged an opulent grand opening celebration in April. There was also a gasoline station, hardware store, two hotels with restaurants, two rental car agencies, an Air Niugini office, video rental store, Christian book store, several clothing stores, snack [TP: "Kai"] bars, and small food shops. The Papindo store (a joint PNG-Indonesian concern) was something of a phenomenon in town in 1995: A steel structure with large glass windows, it was the most modern-looking building in town. Inside, it had the province's largest selection of Japanese and Chinese electronics, watches, and other consumer goods, at prices which significantly undercut the local competition. Moreover, it was open on Sunday.

Lorengau became especially vibrant on weekends when its beaches would fill with fiberglass boats from all over the province - relatives who had come to town to shop or perhaps seek remittances from relatives. On fortnights (the bi-weekly paydays), the post-office became abuzz with people calling relatives in urban centres, asking for money via the office's popular "Send money fast" (TP: "Salim Mani Kwik") service. One local ex-parliamentarian estimated that over a million kina came into the province annually via these remittances.

The energetic Australian proprietor of the hotel was seeking to make Lorengau a tourist destination, primarily through the promotion of sea-kayaking trips. However, business was paltry. The only regular foreign visitors to the town were the crews of the mainly Phillipino, Korean, and Russian tuna fishing ships which routinely came to the harbor to transfer their catches to enormous mother ships, which could carry 700 tons of fish.

Manus Provincial High School (MPHS)

MPHS opened as Manus Junior High School in January, 1963, and became a provincial high school in 1975. In 1995 it had 24 teachers and an enrollment of approximately 620 students. This number included equal numbers of boys and girls, and 230 day students who generally walked, took public motor vehicles (PMVs), or got rides from relatives to school.

The school is located on a hill about 1 kilometer west of the town center. The bulk of its campus, including its classrooms, dormitories, library, dining hall, and

basketball and volleyball courts, was built in the 1960s, and the school has lacked the funds to upgrade its facilities. Some buildings, especially the grade 7, 8, and 9 boys' dormitories, were badly in need of repair: Jagged holes in the dirty fiberglass walls, broken screens, chipped concrete, rusty beds, and broken shelves were all commonplace. Many classroom desks were missing benches or tops. Worse, the school was entirely dependent on rain for its water supply and, without large new tanks or a well, was vulnerable during periods of drought. When the school's water tanks were empty, students often walked the kilometer down to the town harbor to bathe in the ocean. In addition, paucity of drinking water led many students to get sick. The Assistant Headmaster attributed part of students' poor attitudes to their schooling to the dilapidated state of the school:

> ...You see students in the dorm, and we don't have money to fix the dorms, but the students, they are living in broken dorms, filthy ones. And sometimes they vandalize the dorms, destroy things. They are frustrated - because we don't have the money to fix things (Fieldnotes 6/26/95).

Teaching materials were also in short supply. The science department had a severe equipment shortage which inhibited hands-on learning in laboratory settings. The school library did not open until midway through the 1995 school year because so many books had been stolen from it in previous years and a librarian could not be found.

Alumni of Manus High School lamented the decay of their campus, especially of a revered feature of their assembly area: A large 6 meter square concrete topographical map of Papua New Guinea which lay just to the side of the assembly area. In 1995 most of the peaks in the highlands part of the map had been broken off, and the paint was

chipped and faded. One alumnus said when he recently went back and saw the map in this state, he wanted to cry.

Ecom High School (EHS)

Ecom High School, founded in 1991 by the Evangelical Church of Manus, was located roughly four kilometers west of Lorengau in the mission settlement of Lugos. It had 16 teachers and 304 students, including a total 1995 grade seven enrollment of 95 students who, due to a shortage of space, were combined in one long bush material classroom. Teachers said this constituted the most populous classroom in PNG ever. The students at EHS, with one or two exceptions, were all boarders and equally male and female.

One of the major logistical difficulties facing the school in the 1995 school year was that its new campus was not yet completely ready for use. Located approximately 400 meters away, on a sloping hillside overlooking Seeadler Harbor, only the teachers' houses and boys' dormitory were ready and occupied. However the classroom buildings, girls dormitory, and mess were unfinished and empty. The situation meant long walks in the hot midday sun for teachers and boys between the two campuses. On the old campus, the two grade ten classes, administrative building, kitchen, and girls dormitory were all housed in permanent cinderblock buildings. However, the grades 7, 8, and 9 classrooms were all bush material with dirt floors, and the grade 8 double classroom also functioned as a crowded mess hall.

Ecom also had water problems; during dry spells the students had to find alternative places to wash. The girls usually went to a stream to the west of the campus; the boys down the long slope to the harbor below. At one point during the school year, the boys went four days without water for their shower block.

I will argue in the chapters to follow that, while these poor physical conditions contributed to student frustration in the schools, their effects on student disengagement were secondary to that of the anti-academic culture produced by students themselves.

## High School Schedule and Curriculum

Both schools adhered to the same general schedule and curriculum. The school year ran from February 3rd to December 2nd and was divided into four terms with week-long holidays between them. Students' daily weekday routine began with wake-up at 5:30, ran through morning clean-up, breakfast, assembly, morning classes, lunch, afternoon classes, work parade or afternoon athletics, dinner, evening study, and lights out at 9:00 p.m.[1] As in all Papua New Guinean schools, students did most of the school's maintenance work during their work parade: typically they gathered and cut firewood for

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[1] The school day itself was divided into eight forty-minute periods. The schools had similar nationally-prescribed curricula with slight variations, as Manus High School had no librarian or expressive arts teacher, and Ecom taught Commerce in grade 9. For example, the distribution of courses over the school week at Manus High was as follows: English - 8 meetings, Maths, Science, and Social Science - 5 meetings each (these were the four core courses tested on the grade 10 SCE); Agriculture - 4 meetings; Practical Skills (for boys) and Home Economics (for girls) - 4 meetings; Commerce - 4 meetings; Physical Education - 3 meetings; Guidance, Religious Instruction, and Library, 1 meeting each.

the kitchen, prepared food, cut grass on school property, landscaped, and disposed of trash.

On Saturday mornings students had a long work parade, followed by punishment parade (additional work parade for those students who had broken rules during the week). Students had free time on Saturday afternoon, which they most frequently used to go into town. Saturday evenings were given to social activities such as sports events (Basketball or volley ball - as Manus High had lighted courts), student-generated drama nights, or, most frequently, video presentations of popular Western movies, Australian rugby, or international soccer. Students generally preferred drama nights and movies - the boys were especially excited about seeing action films, such as the all-time Manus favorite, Rambo. Sundays consisted of cleanup and church services, free time during the afternoon, and study hall at night.

Both schools had comprehensive rules regarding student conduct.[2] However, as I will detailed below, students routinely broke rules in all of these areas, and frequently went unpunished.

## Critiques of Teaching Practice

This section reports critical statements from students, teachers, and administrators regarding teacher practice in the two high schools. Student interview and

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[2] These rules included: attendance (punctuality at all classes, assemblies, and work parades); absence (students were not allowed to leave school grounds without permission); sexual conduct (male-female sexual relationships were forbidden and punishable by expulsion); and use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and betelnut (which could lead to disciplinary action or expulsion).

questionnaire data indicated that teaching practice did affect some students' approaches to school. Like the poor physical conditions of the schools mentioned above, teaching practice was not as significant a factor in contributing to student academic disengagement as the ways in which students were resolving their dilemmas over future occupation and identity within the student culture (which I will discuss in Chapters 6 and 7). However, the pedagogical practices reported here did seem to contribute to conditions within the schools which were conducive to the development of an anti-academic student culture.

Students especially at Manus High were very critical of their teachers, both with regard to teacher truancy and pedagogy itself. The statements recorded here reveal the symbiotic, precarious and sometimes punitive relationship between teachers and students, particularly how teachers' actions were often motivated by a lack of understanding of student behavior - which, as I will discuss below, could be attributed to adjustment problems and dilemmas about identity.

I begin with a brief discussion of factors underlying a teacher shortage at Manus High. Two weeks into the 1995 school year Manus High was still short five teachers (English, Agriculture, Physical Education, Science, Expressive Arts, and Library). Some teachers said other teachers did not want to come to Manus because the students tended to misbehave (TP: "hambak") and prices in the town market were too high. However, after another two weeks all of these slots were filled with the exception of Expressive Arts.

Local critiques of teaching fell into several categories: 1) Pedagogical clarity and explanation; 2) Teacher truancy and lack of preparation; and, 3) Non-enforcement of rules. These tendencies led students to say that teachers were "slack", or that they didn't care about their students (TP: "Ol i no bisi long mipela").

Pedagogical Clarity and Explanation

Many students complained that their teachers often simply put work up on the board for them to do and left the classroom, leaving no chance for students to ask questions. One grade 9 Manus High girl wrote back to a friend in the village that "learning is getting tough and tough." She showed me the note, and when I asked why she felt that way, she said,

> Learning is getting tough and tough because some teachers, they don't teach well - Don't explain things well (Fieldnotes 6/23/95).

Indeed, some teachers' primary instructional methods consisted of identifying portions of the textbook for students to copy into their notebooks. This practice seemed partly motivated by teacher's impatience with student performance. One Ecom grade 8 boy said,

> They [teachers] just come and write the work on the board and not explaining it, and they just go back to the staff room, when they are angry with us. [One teacher], he asked a question, and we knew the answer, but can't put it in order, in English, so we are trying to tell him in English, and, so, he said we waste time, and he just leave us, put work on the board and leave us. He's the worst (Fieldnotes 6/23/95).

Student dilemmas regarding English usage will be discussed below. This quotation however, illustrates a kind of dysfunctional relationship between teacher and student

where, due to different understandings about their roles in the learning process, they are mutually failing one another. I will discuss how students' changing personal subjectivities affected these dysfunctional relationships in Chapter 6.

Teacher Truancy and Tardiness

Lack of preparation, lateness, and truancy on the part of teachers was a much bigger problem at Manus High than at Ecom. Classroom observations and interviews with teachers indicated that they were frequently unprepared for their lessons. One day when I asked one English teacher if I could attend her class, she made the following confession:

> Teacher: I haven't prepared anything specially for them... um... I did not prepare my lessons this weekend... so...
> PD: You'd rather me not go?
> Teacher: Yes, maybe next week (Fieldnotes 6/26/95).

This teacher did not go to the class in question.

Data collected on average teacher lateness at the two schools (with missed periods averaged in) collected over a two month period in the middle of the school year indicated that at EHS teachers were on average 8.26 minutes late, while at MPHS teachers were 13.08 minutes late. Students theorized that teachers usually did not come to their classes after receiving their bi-weekly paycheck ("fortnight"). One grade nine Ecom boy said,

> Fortnight. Always, the week after fortnight, after the teachers get paid, they usually don't come to class. Because they have their check. But then the next week they usually come (Fieldnotes 5/1/95).

My observations indicated that this statement exaggerated the situation - teachers were only slightly more likely to be absent after a fortnight.

Enforcement of Rules

Observations and interviews indicated that inconsistent enforcement of rules was a major problem at both schools. Rules which went unenforced most typically were those which restricted students' visits to town, students' absence from class or work parade, and their chewing of betelnut. Students from both schools routinely went to town during the school week (when they were not allowed to) and said that, even though they saw teachers there, the teachers said nothing to them. This grade 10 boy from Manus High explained.

> PD: So students like to go to town?
> Student: Most of them go without permission, but the teachers do not do anything. The students, they even just take the main road into town, but the teachers, if they see them, they will just let them go. The teachers are not very strict (Fieldnotes 5/4/95).

More experienced teachers occasionally chastised younger teachers for not enforcing rules. One Manus High teacher said the younger teachers were always, "staying away from their classes and not enforcing discipline" (Fieldnotes 7/21/995). A veteran science teacher at Manus High admonished some of his younger colleagues when they said they had seen some seventh graders skipping work parade:

> And what did you do? Didn't you say something? We have to do something about it. Be strong. We can't just let them slack off (Fieldnotes 5/19/95).

In addition, teachers who were on duty over a weekend frequently failed to organize an activity for students on Saturday night. This left students feeling neglected, unhappy, and angry.

The Manus High Assistant Headmaster (who was from another province) lamented the fact that so many of his teachers did not enforce rules and had a slack approach to their teaching. He said of the teachers,

> Many of them don't care. Many of the teachers, they don't bother to enforce the rules. They just don't do it. But I think we must. Now it is the "holiday fever" [just before term two holiday]. We must enforce the rules. You heard in class today, their physical education lesson, the teacher did not show up. This happens alot here. The other thing they do is just take the easy way out. For example, in P.E., just give them the ball, and let them play, like at sports. But I want P.E. to be a lesson, where the students learn skills. But Mr.... [the P.E. teacher], he doesn't listen. These two new P.E. teachers, they are good, they teach. And I have told them, "You should not stay here in Manus. You should see what other high schools in the country are like. Because they are not like Manus" (Fieldnotes 6/26/95).

The veteran science teacher, however, criticized teachers and administrators alike for not trying to understand students' problems:

> The problem is the teachers and the administration. They are not doing what they are supposed to. The head and deputy, they do not come around to check on the teachers, say "how are you going?" No, they stay up there [motioning to the administration building], behind their desks [he makes a movement picking up a phone]. They don't come out and make sure the teachers are doing their jobs, and alot of them aren't. The teachers don't... [hesitation]... they... we don't talk to the students about what their problems are. We just blame them... We need stronger discipline... If a teacher is not doing what they are supposed to, the head must do something (Fieldnotes 7/17/95).

This quotation underscores the problems regarding teacher practice, the problems of inconsistent enforcement of rules, and the important issue of understanding students which I will return to in later chapters.

Constructivist Pedagogy

Those teachers who did exhibit some understanding of student's home background and interests and used a correspondingly constructivist approach in their teaching enjoyed success in the classroom and were generally respected by students. Some teachers accomplished this by frequently citing examples of village life in their lessons. Others made references to popular culture, such as one mathematics teacher who frequently used this method to connect with students: For example, while teaching a geometry lesson, he once imitated a popular reggae song by riffing on the third and fourth syllables of the word "parallelogram." The students were surprised and delighted.

More specifically, the following vignette documents part of a grade 10 science lesson at Manus High where the teacher used constructivist methods to draw subject matter out of students; and appropriated the powerful social influences among students to maintain their interest:

> [MPHS 10p Science 7/25/95] The teacher came in and wrote the word "light" on the board. Then he asked the students to "come up with something about light, anything about light." He gave them a while to think, then went back and plopped the chalk down on Big Chris's desk in back.
>
> There was a moment of stunned disbelief, and a big shocked smile on Chris's face. But then after he realized the teacher wasn't going to back down, he went up to the board and wrote "heat." And then the teacher

said he could give the chalk to whomever he wanted, and Chris gave it to a girl. And she went up and wrote something, and this went on successfully all over the class, until there were about 20 words on the board. Bob gave me the chalk at one point, and I wrote "illuminate", which the students did not seem to know. Then I gave the chalk to shy small Bernard from the North Coast, who literally twisted in his chair, screwed his face up in agony, and generally suffered for a full TWO minutes before abruptly turning to the back wall, getting up, going up to the board, and writing "energy."

But the kids are enjoying it, most likely seeing their classmates have to write and be humiliated. When Paul, a persistent class-cutter who sits in back with his bikhet friends, is given the chalk, he does nothing, and the boys next to him laugh. Then another boy next to him bails him out and goes up and writes something. But then several seconds later, Paul DOES go up, and writes "strength" on the board, much to the astonishment of the boys in back.

So, there are about 25 words up there, and then the teacher says, "Okay, we're going to go around the list, and see if we think the word is related to "light," and then we can ask the person who put it up to explain. The third one we come to is "changes," and it is the first one the teacher asks a student to clarify. It is tall quiet Alan's in front, whom the teacher had previously identified to me as a "bright" student. But Alan's head remains down on his desk for a FULL MINUTE, and he does not answer. Then Molean, near him, volunteers an answer.

After the lesson, when I commented to the teacher how well I thought the lesson went, he said, "We just have to break through that barrier. They are afraid to talk in front of their classmates."

This vignette illustrates an important aspect of the classroom environment in Manus which I will take up further below: Students' embarrassment at participating in class - specifically their fear of speaking English in front of their classmates. This teacher was able to engage students in the lesson and overcome some of this shyness by allowing a degree of agency (by being able to embarrass their friends themselves). However, many teachers at the two high schools, due to lack of pedagogical clarity, truancy, or

unenforcement of rules, did not attain this level of success in the classroom. A more detailed discussion of teacher practice is out of the purview of this dissertation. Nevertheless, the evidence presented above suggests that the dysfunctional teacher-student relationship in Manus high school classrooms contributed to the climate of academic disengagement in the schools.

This section has introduced the structures, routines, and teaching practices in Manus high schools and offered a preliminary glimpse of some of the organizational and social characteristics of the student culture. Manus Provincial High School and Ecom High School faced hardships during the 1995 school year such as further deterioration of their physical plants, water supply problems, and teacher shortages. The quality of teaching in both schools varied greatly. While a few teachers engaged students through largely constructivist techniques, many lacked pedagogical clarity, were frequently late to class or truant, and did not consistently enforce school rules. Students stated that these practices made them believe that their teachers did not care about them. Indeed, a respected veteran teacher at one of the high schools confessed that a central problem was that the teachers did not adequately understand students' problems. I argue that the poor physical conditions at the schools and inconsistent quality of teaching contributed to conditions which were conducive to the development of an anti-academic student culture.

## Documenting Student Disengagement from Learning: The Anti-Academic School Climate

In this section I present evidence on student underachievement and resistance in the two high schools. I begin by discussing the prevalence of student absenteeism and typical forms of truancy. I next describe the anti-academic classroom climate in Manus and focus in particular on how issues around English language usage contributed to this atmosphere. I go on to depict study habits and homework practices of low-achieving students. This section elaborates how students subverted the educational mission of the school through: 1) "making out games" (Foley, 1990) which gave the impression of learning and work with a minimum of effort; 2) using wantok relationships to intimidate teachers and break school rules without getting caught; and 3) active resistance. As I will show at the end of the section, this resistance ranged from subtle messages of disrespect towards teachers in classrooms, to small-time vandalism of school property, to the mob-like student beating of a Manus high school teacher in June, 1995. I will explore explanations for these student behaviors in Chapters 6 and 7. I will argue that student academic disengagement and resistance must be seen as a rational response, given students' perceptions of the limited opportunity structure after grade 10, the fact that most of them could return to their villages after high school and make their living from subsistence economics, and the powerful social influences enacted by their classmates against academic achievement.

Student Absenteeism

The most striking thing about academic classes at the two schools was the large number of empty seats - especially in grade 10 classrooms. Typically a fifth of all students were absent from grade ten classes, and occasionally up to two thirds, even from core classes (English, Math, Social Science, Science) in the months preceding the critical national grade ten examination. Given the unreliability of student attendance records mentioned below, I kept my own period by period attendance records of the MPHS 10p class, and the EHS 10b class during two months in the middle of the school year. I found that the MPHS 10p class had 73.3% student attendance, and the EHS 10b class had 56.8% student attendance during this period. There were no major differences in attendance according to student sex.

Student absenteeism often started early in the day with the morning assembly. One day, just after assembly had started at 7:40 a.m. at Manus High, roughly half the students were missing from the standing columns of their classmates. The assistant headmaster slowly climbed up the steps of the platform and addressed the students:

> Today I cannot jump up here on to the platform. On other days I jump up. But today I have to climb up here step by step because I am so heavy. My heart is heavy. There are so many students missing (Fieldnotes 6/28/95).

Many students were still in their dorms sleeping or were up on the mountain behind the school chewing betelnut, or smoking cigarettes or marijuana. Though it was their duty to do so, dormitory prefects were usually reticent to herd their friends out of the dorm to attend assembly. Dozens of day students were still strung out along the road leading to the school, seemingly unconcerned with their tardiness.

Teachers and administrators agreed that along with curtailed effort, student absenteeism was the most grievous problem at the two schools. One Ecom teacher commented on one of the school's two grade ten classes,

> Teacher: The worst are the 10bs. Many of them don't do well because they just don't come to class. They don't come.
> PD: Why not?
> Teacher: I just don't know (Fieldnotes 7/25/95).

After several months of observation and questioning, several patterns emerged about student absenteeism during the school day: 1) If it was very hot, students would often stay out of the stuffy corrugated tin classrooms, saying it was too uncomfortable to be there and that they just wanted to stay in the (cooler fiberglass-walled) dormitory to sleep or relax. 2) Students would often skip the class after physical education because they were "tired." 3) If a teacher was late to class (or did not come at all), many students would typically wait 3-5 minutes into the period, then whisper to each other "take off" and would quickly exit the room. 4) Students would sometimes feign illness to be able to leave class early:

> [EHS 10b Social Science 8/2/95]. I come in at the beginning of the first period and Mr. Kwalo immediately comes over to me and says, clearly agitated and with raised eyebrows that "half the students, 18 of them, did not come today." I look around and can see it is true. I took my seat towards the back of the classroom and the teacher began the lesson. There were only 6 of the 17 boys in the class here. Twenty minutes into the lesson, Alfred, an above average student (CM158)[3] got up, went to the

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[3] CM refers to the mean of the marks students received in their four core classes (English, Maths, Science, Social Science) for the last marking period (3) during the study. This score is out of a total of 200. Because MPHS and EHS used slightly different criteria for the determination of these marks, they are not strictly comparable across the two contexts, but rather are intended to give an approximate idea of student achievement.

> teacher, put his hand on his head, and said softly, "mi sik." Mr. Kwalo put his hand on Alfred's head, said "okay," and Alfred solemnly sulked out of the classroom with a squinty-eyed suffering look on his face. Meanwhile, Arthur (CM141) in the left front corner was frantically gesturing to get my attention. He was wildly shaking his head and whispering loudly, "em i no sik!" (He is not sick). Arthur pointed over his shoulder to the boys' dormitory and put the back of his hand up to his tilted head to indicate that Alfred had wanted to go there to sleep. Sure enough, as Alfred made his way around the classroom, he stole two glances inside and gave us a furtive smile. Then he ran around the adjacent staffroom and disappeared towards the dorm.

Students commonly used this strategy to leave class. In addition to the dormitory, students often went to town, down to the beach (at Ecom), up to the mountain (at Manus High) - both to chew betelnut and smoke cigarettes or marijuana, or, to their village if transportation was available and they were willing to be truant for a day or more.

Many students were able to skip classes regularly without punishment. This was largely because both schools had lax attendance policies which were inconsistently enforced. Students were allowed 20 days (160 academic periods) of absence for an entire school year. Late in the school year when administrators realized that some students actually might approach that quota, they considered changing the policy to 20 academic periods per year. Teachers did not always check attendance sheets themselves, as class attendance was usually taken by teacher-appointed class captains. However, if the class captain or vice class captain was a friend or wantok, a student wanting to skip class could make a deal: Be marked present in exchange for bringing back betelnut or cigarettes from town. These arrangements were very common. Indeed, the prevalence of student absenteeism and the anti-academic school climate was clearly apparent in a quotation from two above-average students in the Ecom 10b class. When I arrived at

their classroom one morning before class, about two months before the national examination, they told me with a trace of pride in their voices, "We have a new saying now. It's called day off." They explained that on some days, if they were tired of school, they would simply run away from campus for the entire day.

As indicated by the evidence above and the desperate quote from a Manus High School teacher cited at the beginning of the chapter, student attendance was a problem at both schools. I next turn to evidence of academic disengagement inside the classrooms themselves.

## Inside the Anti-Academic Classroom

Many classrooms at both Manus and Ecom high schools - especially grade 10 classrooms - had an anti-academic climate. This was evident in a paucity of student participation (related to the English language issues described below), and widespread student disrespect for and resistance toward teachers.

English Language Issues. Issues around English language usage constrained student participation in classrooms. In Chapter 7 I will explore how these issues were related to the student identity dilemmas being negotiated within the student culture. In the two grade 10 classrooms under study at each school, teachers commonly received no responses when they asked students questions in class. Moreover, discussion was extremely rare. The lack of participation was due partially to students' difficulties with spoken English - plenty could write but not speak well. Contrary to school rules which

stipulated that students speak English-only on campus, students spoke virtually no English whatsoever - especially boys. Student social life was conducted almost entirely in Tok Pisin and where possible, in bits of mutually intelligible Tok Ples. English which was spoken was usually used as a form of play talk [TP: "tok pilai"]; often in the form of imitating famous western movie stars and their accents. The paucity of spoken English had more to do with students' reluctance to speak English in front of their classmates. Indeed, on the student questionnaire, 47% of boys and 33% of girls answered "yes" to the question, "Are you shy to speak English in class?" (I address these sex-based differences below).

This shyness was manifested in several ways. Firstly, even if students knew the correct answer to a teacher's question, they often would not participate:

> [MPHS 9m Maths 2/10/95] The teacher writes a fraction on the board and asks, "How would you write this fraction as a decimal?" I can hear three or four students near me in the back of the room quietly mutter the answer, and they are CORRECT. But then the teacher calls out, "hands up, hands up," and NO ONE puts their hands up. The teacher writes the correct decimal answer on the board himself.

Secondly, when students did volunteer a correct answer, they could be ridiculed if they used English words which other students deemed too complex, obscure, or "fancy." For example when one grade 10 boy answered a teacher's questions on crop maintenance by saying, "You can use insecticide," another boy behind him whispered "insecticide!" incredulously under his breath.

Thirdly, the climate of intense social scrutiny (described in detail in chapter 7) in the classroom meant that the social price for English-language mistakes could be steep:

> [MPHS 10p English 7/26/95] At the end of the in-class survey, the teacher asked Big Chris from Rabaul in the back of the class to count the hands for the various responses. For one category there were no hands raised, and when the teacher asked him how many there were, Chris said, "Zeroes." The class erupted in laughter at his addition of the "s," "HaaaaHaaaaaa!!" and then a long low whooping communal Manus cheer, "Whooooooooooo!!" Chris looked mightily embarrassed and sank into his chair... After class while the students waited for the next teacher to come, some of the boys behind Chris were kidding around with him - I heard one say "zeroes!" and the other boys laughed, and Chris smiled and shook his head.

This climate inhibited students from asking questions in class, even if they DID have questions for the teacher:

> Grade 10 MPHS Boy: Some students, they are ashamed of speaking in class. They - teachers used to say - "any questions?", and they DO have questions, but they don't have the courage to stand up and ask the questions.
> PD: Is it being shy of the teacher or other students?
> Student: Students. Students make fun of other students. They make fun of the way they speak English (Fieldnotes 6/2/95).

The fact that girls were less shy to speak English was not lost on boys. Boys often ridiculed girls for their uses of "fancy" language and accused them of sometimes using long English words when they did not know the meanings of them. One grade 10 boy at Manus High said,

> Plenty of times, the girls see a word inside their book, and they will say this word. But they don't even know the meaning of this word. They just use it. And sometimes they make up words too! (Fieldnotes 7/24/95).

Nearly all students interviewed mentioned their shyness of speaking English in class. Only a small number of high-achieving students said they were not shy. Some of them added that their friends or wantoks occasionally gave them a question to ask in class.

Student questionnaire data indicated that, especially for boys, shyness to speak English was associated with perceived difficulty of being a good student. Questionnaire data indicated that for boys there was almost a significant relationship ($p=.059$) between being shy to speak English and finding it hard to be a good student (See Appendix 3 for complete questionnaire). For girls, there was no such relationship. One veteran teacher at Manus High School commented on the changes he had seen over time in English language use at the school:

> When I was a student here, and later, we had to speak English EVERYWHERE [emphasis his]. And these students NEVER speak it [emphasis his]. And they can't write it either. Before, many students were... aggressive - to ask questions in class, and we used to compete, hard. We used to say, "if you beat me [on a test], I will get you next time." But now, no (Fieldnotes 7/17/95).

As will be elaborated in later chapters, English usage was an important marker of identity (and possible betrayal) in the student culture. Students who spoke what was deemed as excessive or "fancy" English were seen as acting "extra" or better than their classmates and were commonly ridiculed or pulled down through a variety of social sanctions. This negative influence will be discussed in chapter 7.

Student Resistance in Class

> "The biggest problem here is student disrespect for teachers. I can't believe some of the things I have seen."
>
> (First year physical education teacher at Manus High 5/9/95)

In addition to the paucity of student participation, various forms of student disrespect and resistance towards teachers were another major contributor to the anti-academic classroom environment in the two high schools.

Students reported that they resisted teachers for several reasons: 1) If they felt they had been treated or punished unfairly by the teacher for something they had done in the dorm, on work parade, or in class; 2) If they felt the teacher was boring or not making sense; or 3) If they simply did not like the teacher.

There were a variety of small scale resistance practices which were apparent in the classroom. At the beginning of a lesson, school rules stipulated that students stand when the teacher entered the room. Many student showed their distaste for certain teachers by refusing to stand. Most teachers let this pass, but some explicitly requested that all students stand. Like all of the resistance practices outlined below, this one was contagious. I commonly saw students start to stand when a teacher entered the room, but then when they saw their classmates sitting, they quickly sat down.

Students also occasionally collected rubbish from the floor and piled it on the teachers desk before the teacher entered the class or threw small stones at each other or at the blackboard when the teacher was not looking.

In addition to staying away from class, the most common form of resistance was talking during a lesson, either privately assailing the teacher (especially if he or she was from another province), or simply telling stories.

> PD: What do students do if they don't respect a teacher?
> Student 1: (EHS Grade 10 Male) They just talk while the teacher is talking.

> Student 2: (EHS Grade 10 Male) Throw stones at the board, making fun of him, describe him as an animal. Mainly Mr.... everybody hates him. And the worst class is grade 10, a and b. Or not attend class. Or attend class but not write (Fieldnotes 6/1/95).

As mentioned above, students also frequently refused to write or participate in class.

Occasionally students openly criticized the teacher, but this was rare:

> [EHS 10b Social Science] Just as the teacher walks through the doorway to leave the room, Peter Palek, a prefect sitting in the back of the room, says in a flat monotone, "Thank you for this exciting lesson."

As will be stressed throughout this report, younger students saw examples of older students' disengagement from school and copied them. This was certainly true in the area of resistance:

> EHS Grade 9 Male: We grade nine boys, we are very surprised to see these grade tens when the teacher is in front of them [in class], acting negatively to the teacher. The grade tens spend a lot of time on their style. Style, and they used to hit little students.

It was not uncommon to see grade 9, 8, or even 7 students tagging along with older grade 10 students (perhaps their wantoks) while they were walking on the beach or going to town, skipping class. The Headmaster of MPHS lamented how these younger students may have been "badly influenced" by these older students.

In addition to the English language issues which underlay the paucity of class participation, the in-class resistance practices of many students contributed to the anti-academic climate in Manus classrooms. Another factor, described next, was the poor study habits of a critical mass of students.

The Study Habits of Underachieving Students

This section describes how low-achieving students went about their homework and studying at both high schools. Because this dissertation is largely concerned with assent in learning and underachievement, this section focuses on describing the effort of these students.

An earlier quotation in this chapter alluded to the atmosphere in many night study halls. Especially in the upper grades, many night study halls were characterized by small groups of students conversing. Often these students did not even have their books out on their desks.

Because there were only two teachers on duty at night, it was very difficult for staff to effectively monitor and supervise evening study. And because this fraternization could get loud, students interested in doing their studies often had to find another venue: At Manus High this was usually the mess; at Ecom, the boy's or girl's dormitory.

Copying Homework. Underachieving students tended to either copy their homework from a classmate, copy some of the teacher's answers from the blackboard in class the next day, or not do it at all. Of copying homework from other students, one high-achieving student in MPHS 10p said with a smile, "that is very popular here." Usually copying took the form below - simply taking another students' notebook:

> [MPHS 10p Commerce] Big Chris from Rabaul (CM92) was in a seat in the back corner. After the period ended he walked towards the front of the room. As he passed little Rudolph's desk (CM112), he swiped his notebook off the top of it and muttered under his breath, "notebook i kam" [give me the notebook]. Rudolph mutters something inaudible as if in

> mock protest, but does not stop Chris from walking out the door with his notebook.

There were some students in 10p who hardly ever did their own homework, and preferred to copy the teachers' answers off the board:

> PD: Are there some students in your class who do not study very much?
> Student: [MPHS Grade 10 Male (CM137)] Yeah, there are some. Some, some, I'll tell you, they will not even do their homework. They will just wait for Mr. Ibos to write on the board. Write everything, and then they will just copy it. And you see, they didn't get anything, ah? If you find the answer yourself, you know that you are learning, ah? But if you just copy, oh, man, that will not even help (Fieldnotes 7/27/95).

Indeed another boy in 10p (CM108) said that most of the students in his class did not try the homework, but rather waited until they got to class and copied the teachers' work on the board. Most teachers were aware of these practices and admonished students to do their own work with statements like:

> [MPHS 10p Maths 6/28/95]
> Teacher: (After going through the previous night's homework equations on the board) I am looking around, and I know that some of you, you are just copying my work, what I have done up on the board. That is not good. You must try them yourselves first, otherwise you will not understand.

However, few teachers explicitly intervened in the copying process. While occasionally they went around the classroom and checked students' homework, they rarely collected it and graded it themselves.

Making Out Games. Students also disengaged themselves from learning by using what Foley (1990) identified as "making out games." These are practices which intend to give the impression that a student is doing the work in the class, while the student is

actually exerting minimal effort and possibly subverting the teachers' objectives. There were three examples of making out games at MPHS and Ecom: group recitations; lying to teachers; and privileging form over content in written work.

Though group recitations of letters or passages were primarily a pedagogical tool of Papua New Guinean community schools, they were fairly common in the high schools as well. During these recitations students regularly read portions they knew well with gusto, and spoke softly or dropped out entirely during passages which were more dubious to them. Often it was the poorer students in class who would be the loudest on the easy portions - giving the teacher (and perhaps themselves) the impression that they knew the material.

Poorer students also lied to teachers about school-related matters. This vignette from an Ecom 10b agriculture practicum illustrates a number of the problems mentioned in this section on student academic disengagement and concludes with a lie told to a teacher. The double period agriculture practicum routinely came after a single period of agriculture theory and was conducted in the garden plots about 300 meters from the boys' dorm and about 800 meters from the girls' dorm (and the main campus). During the practicum students were supposed to work on their gardens or whatever project they were assigned at that time. On this hot day, the practicum was held during periods 7 and 8 - these were conditions which commonly led many students to skip the class:

> [EHS 10b Agriculture Practicum 7/31/95] Thirty minutes into the first period, and most students are extremely late. There were 9 girls who showed up for the practicum, and four boys - though four more boys showed up an hour late (out of a class enrollment of 36). Over half the students in the class were absent for this period. The teacher told me,

"Usually the boys just come very late. Maybe for the last 10 or 15 minutes of the class period. It's not that they're lazy or tired. It's the system. They won't be punished strongly enough. They are just staying in the dorm. It is always this way with the practical. And the gardens have failed. Not because of my part. But because of the students' part. The agriculture practicum - it usually gives me a headache."

The students poke around their plots, most of which are overgrown with weeds. They have not been able to harvest anything yet, though Molong Jacob found a few beans. Partly because of soil conditions, but mainly because of student apathy.

45 minutes before the period ends (check, this was at 2:10), two girls started climbing up the far slope, seemingly heading back towards the main campus. The teacher called out to two other girls who had begun to follow them, "Where are you going?" "Back to the dorm," they responded. The teacher yelled louder this time to the first pair of girls, "Girls, where are you going? Come back!" "We're going to get our grassknives," they responded. The teacher muttered under his breath, "They're going to the dorm and they're not coming back." A little later, Arthur, who had observed this exchange from a short distance away, said, "Can I go to the dorm to get my grassknife?"

This vignette illustrates several aspects of the anti-academic climate at Ecom: The absenteeism and tardiness of students and the consequences of a lax attendance policy; student apathy towards their schoolwork; and student willingness to lie to their teachers in an attempt to leave class early.

The last and most common form of a making out game was in students' adherence to form over content in their in-class written work. When a teacher assigned an in-class written project, students routinely spent the largest portion of their time on the format of the assignment: They used rulers and their ubiquitous multi-colored pens and carefully drew often multi-colored borders around the page, numbered the questions, then

carefully copied the questions. Many students never got around to answering the questions:

> [MPHS 10s English 5/10/95] The teacher was not prepared to go over students' homework from last night, and has given the students this entire period to do another assignment in class: To copy a passage from their text into their notebooks, and look up and write the definitions of the underlined words in the passage. The student beside me spent the whole period as follows: She neatly made a border around her page, and neatly copied the passage from the text in black ink. Then, she underlined the appropriate words with a ruler in red pen. With a minute left in the period, she took out her dictionary and began to look up words. At this point, the teacher said, "anyone finished?" and no one raised their hand (Fieldnotes 5/10/95).

Fife (1994) has described this practice of privileging form over content in Papua New Guinean schools as attempts to adopt the "look" of modernity without the substance of it. In the MPHS and Ecom classrooms where these practices were evident, they were also seemingly used by students as stalling tactics. They gave the appearance of hard work while delaying true cognitive engagement. While some students did finish these assignments during a later study hall, many ended up copying them from a classmate or the teacher, or never completed them at all.

When I commented on some of these practices to a veteran MPHS teacher who was from Manus himself, he responded,

> Manus students are smart. They know how to beat the system - to get off without doing too much work (Fieldnotes 7/17/95).

Thus, these making out games enabled students to give teachers the impression of doing work, while exerting minimal effort. They were one of the mechanisms by which a critical mass of students established an anti-academic climate in the high schools.

Uses of the Wantok System to Subvert School Processes. The wantok system was another mechanism which students (and their parents) used to undermine school authority and break school rules. The most far-reaching use of wantokism in the Manus high schools was in the area of discipline. Several teachers and administrators at both high schools told me that along with excessively high market prices, the primary reason Papua New Guinean teachers did not want to come teach in Manus was because the students were "bikheted," and that if disciplined, wantoks would be summoned to confront and possibly beat the offending teacher. A teacher who had just left MPHS after working there for five years elaborated:

> PD: Is it true that a lot of teachers don't want to come to Manus because of the students?
> Ex-teacher: Yes. It is the attitude of the students. They don't respect the teachers. And if they get in trouble, they will tell their relatives in town, and they will come up to the school and fight the teacher. These incidents happen about three to four times every year. For example, there was one student who came into my class with a sleeve cut off his shirt [a popular "rascal" -like style of student dress]. I sent him out of the class, explaining that it was against school rules to wear that kind of shirt. The kid left, and didn't come back. He told his parents, then his parents called the headmaster to complain. But the student had not told his parents the TRUTH. Once I set the parents straight, the student came back, apologized to me, and was back in class (Fieldnotes 5/31/95).

A new physical education teacher at MPHS was warned when he arrived at the school that he should be careful when he disciplines students, because often they would go home, tell their relatives, and the relatives would come belt the teacher. He said, "I don't know why it is, but it seems to be something that happens here in Manus" (Fieldnotes 5/9/95). Wantoks occasionally also came to the schools to find and beat students who had hit or fought students who were wantoks of their own. Threats from parents and

relatives to the school were also fairly common. When the headmaster suspended several boys from an outlying island for the teacher-beating incident described below, several parents and relatives of the students in town called him up and threatened to burn down the school's administration building. It seems clear that this dynamic was related to teachers' reluctance to enforce school rules.

Students also tried to employ the wantok system to gain preferential treatment from the educational system. In a grade 10 guidance class, the headmaster commented that some students were trying to use the wantok system to get offers (scholarships) for tertiary education: They were writing to Madang Teachers College, hoping to gain acceptance there because the headmaster was from Manus.

In addition, students routinely used the wantok system outside of the classroom: To get extra food from relatives, or (especially with boys) to get their female wantoks to wash their clothes. The most common use of the wantok system in everyday student life, though, was in obtaining favors and leniency from class captains, vice-class captains, and prefects. In this area of student practice, the lines between friends and wantoks was often blurred, as students often mentioned both in their responses:

> Student 1: It is the prefect's job to rouse (get out) the students in the morning.
> PD: Why don't they do it?
> Student 1: Because some of these students are their friends, wantoks, and-
> Student 2: They are big enough to punch them, so they're afraid of chasing them to the assembly area. Instead of that, they leave them in the dormitory, smoking, or.... (Fieldnotes 6/28/95)

This quote illustrates that it was difficult for student leaders to get wantoks or friends to obey school rules. This is partly due to the reciprocal nature of many Manus wantok

relationships.[4] As mentioned earlier, class captains or vice class captains often marked their truant friends or wantoks present:

> PD: Do class captains sometimes mark people present who aren't' there?
> Student 1: Sometimes they just mark friends or wantoks present; who bring them back buai, medal (a brand of cigarettes), or food.
> Student 2: It's Manus High School's style. Our class captain still does it. He's a drug boy (Fieldnotes 6/28/95).

The corruption of certain class captains at Manus High led some teachers to take attendance themselves, though with their heavy teaching load this was often difficult to do consistently. Manus students used the wantok system creatively and efficiently. They often seemed to be able to find obscure blood ties between each other in order to cement a relationship that both could exploit. When I interviewed students in groups of two and three and asked if they were related, they often paused, and said hesitatingly, "Yes.... we are related liklik (a little)." As one veteran Ecom teacher from Sepik province pointed out to me, "These people are very good at discovering relationships between themselves." While wantok relationships had the aforementioned advantages for students, distinctions between blood relations, friendships, and peer acquaintanceships often became blurred in the student culture. The influences of these relationships on student engagement are taken up in detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

Student Resistance Outside the Classroom: The Beating of Mr. Kanda

In addition to the ways listed above in which they expressed their disrespect for teachers and resisted classroom routines, students at both schools also overtly resisted

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[4] They are based, to varying degrees, on the mutual exchange of favors.

school procedures outside the classroom. This section details these practices and offers a description of the most serious case of student resistance during the 1995 school year (indeed, during the 1990s) - the mob-like beating of the Manus High School teacher Bob Kanda.

The fact that students at both Manus High and Ecom High compared their schools to prisons attests to the regard they held for many school rules and routines. Ecom was occasionally called a "prison camp" (though more in 1994 when student trips to town were much more restricted); and Manus High students sometimes referred to themselves as "MPHSlaves."

Students frequently broke school rules outside the classroom: They smoked cigarettes or marijuana, chewed betelnut, wore cut-off jeans to the mess; carried food back to the dorm from the mess; and swore. In addition, a small group of students at Manus High occasionally broke sections of the fiberglass walls in the dormitories; and many students threw rocks on the roofs of the mess or administration building if a video tape being shown for weekend entertainment was cut short, or if no weekend entertainment had been planned. At Ecom, a student protested the absence of a Saturday night activity by spitting a bright red stain of buai across the school's bulletin board. These everyday practices contributed to an anti-academic climate at the two schools.

There had been more serious incidents of destruction of school property and assault against teachers by Manus students in past years. Though it had never been proven, it was widely believed that disgruntled students burned down the Manus High administration building in 1989. In 1994 the wife of Ecom's headmaster was the target

of a thrown rock the size of a brick. It missed her head by inches. That assault paled in comparison, however, to what happened to Bob Kanda on the night of May 8, 1995. The following description is based on interviews with teachers, the Manus headmaster, students, and the night time security guard who was on duty during the incident.

Bob Kanda had taught maths and science at MPHS in 1992 and 1993, and at EHS in previous years, but had been given a bad report largely because of misbehavior and excessive beating of students. Interviewed students reported that he used to beat them on the buttocks with a cane which had a rope tied to the end. If there was some transgression in the dorm, his usual technique for resolution was to get all of the students together and beat one of them after another with the cane until one of them disclosed who had committed the infraction. He beat at least two students, one a girl, with the rubber necklaces they were wearing. One boy had been beaten by Mr. Kanda for having seen the teacher beat one of his wantoks at the school. Students also said that Mr. Kanda used to get drunk in town, come back to the school at night, and threaten students with a grassknife. One said, "When he gets drunk, he goes crazy." A parent of one of the students beaten by Mr. Kanda had reported the teacher to the police and Mr. Kanda had not been re-hired in 1994, but was hired by MPHS for the 1995 school year because of the teacher shortage in the province.

Mr. Kanda and his wife, who was from the south-coast Titan island called Lou, lived in a small teacher's house about 60 feet from the two grade ten boys' dormitories across a small dirt road at the western end of the campus. On Monday evening, May 8, 1995, Mr. Kanda attended an agriculture department meeting in the teachers' lounge.

When he got home, he had an argument with his wife because he had locked their water tank so she could not cook, make tea, or give water to students (he may have thought she was having an affair with a student). He then left the house for a short while and returned later. At 10:30 the duty teacher heard screams coming from their house. The grade 10 boys across the road, several of whom were Mr. Kanda's wife's wantoks, heard her screams, as they often did after their own lights went out at 9 p.m. Fed up with his beating of her, these wantoks began to throw stones onto the roof of Mr. Kanda's house. Then one of them shot a rock with a slingshot which hit and broke a glass window. Mr. Kanda immediately stopped what he was doing and went directly to the staff room to see the headmaster. The headmaster proposed they go see the duty teacher in order to "sort out" who broke the window. But Mr. Kanda said no - he wanted to get the police immediately. Despite the headmaster's protests, Mr. Kanda walked the kilometer down the hill from the school to the police department.

Within a half an hour, 15 policemen arrived on campus in a truck fully armed with pistols, rifles, and gas guns. Mr. Kanda had told them "Smith" was the boy who had broken his window (even though he had not been sure, and was actually incorrect). The police grouped themselves around Dorm 6 (Smith's dormitory), and asked for him to come outside. He came outside onto the steps, and he said he wanted to hear his rights. One of the policemen said, "You can't question us!" and slapped the boy in the face. Then, as a group, they beat him in the torso and ass with the butts of their rifles, and kicked him in the head with their boots. After a few moments, one of the officers apparently realized that this was an inappropriate response and ordered the policemen to

leave. They took the boy down to the station for questioning and released him at about midnight.

Kanda, who had been at the station all this time, set off up the hill for the school shortly thereafter. When he approached Dorm 6, a group of six boys were waiting for him there with Smith just behind them. One of the boys asked in Pidgin, "Why didn't you just go to the duty teacher?" Kanda's response was unrecoverable. The boys approached Wamoi, and he tried to slash out at them with a glass shard from his window which he was still carrying. Then Smith stepped forward and said in Pidgin, "I'm going to fight you Kanda." Kanda turned and ran back down the hill, pursued by a group of 10-20 boys - many of whom had been beaten by Kanda in the past. They caught him after a chase of about 100 meters near the school garage, tackled him, and kicked and beat him in the body and face. Once they even kicked him in the ass to get him to stand up. But then he freed himself and ran farther down the hill, but the mob caught up to him and started to beat him again. Two of the boys who told this part of the story reported actually feeling a little sorry for Mr. Kanda at this point. Mr. Kanda was later taken to the hospital. He had two teeth knocked out, and a 2-3" long laceration over his left eye.

In the morning, many of the veteran teachers staged a sit-in and refused to go to class for the first three periods. They were concerned over respect and safety for teachers and the fact that this incident had occurred, much like the 1989 violence against teachers and arson at the school.

The headmaster called a special assembly at 1:30 p.m., where he said, "We know this man (referring to Mr. Kanda's history), but he is a teacher, and we must respect our

teachers." He then acceded to the school inspector, a man named Webbe Moide (from another province), who said firmly,

> This kind of behavior is not acceptable. You are students and you must respect your teachers. If there are any more incidents like this, the AS (Assistant Secretary for Education) is prepared to suspend the school. Suspend ALL the students. You cannot transfer to another high school. That will be it. And I will call the police up here to guard and protect the school. The riot squad. And you know what they can do to people who do not cooperate. Okay, I want you to go to your period 7 and 8 classes right now, and remember, NO HAMBAK![5] (Fieldnotes 5/9/95).

Smith was immediately suspended from the school for a week while the Provincial Education Board decided whether to expel him. His parents came to the school and said they were going to take the police to court. The next morning, a policeman's son was beaten up by students at MPHS.

When I asked students in interviews about their reactions to the beating of Mr. Kanda, some expressed their surprise that students would beat a teacher. Most, however, told tales like the ones above about how Mr. Kanda had repeatedly used corporal punishment against students. Mr. Kanda did not return to Manus High during the 1995 school year. After several weeks of convalescence, he was transferred to a teaching post at Bundrahei High School on the southwest coast - a school badly in need of teachers because of the province-wide shortage.

The Kanda episode can be explained partly as an explosive venting of the frustrating dilemmas facing many students. These dilemmas, to be discussed in the next two chapters, involved struggles over aspirations, identity, and personhood - particularly

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[5] Vain boasting, or fooling around.

how the self was located in a web of social relationships. Importantly, this event came to pass largely because of the ways in which the students involved were resolving these dilemmas: They felt that their future life was not entirely dependent upon school success and securing cash employment. The next chapter details student rationales for underachievement and resistance, and the primary alternative path envisioned by many of them: a return to their natal villages.

## Conclusions

This chapter has described the school environment in Manus, and has focussed on a climate of academic disengagement that was found in both Manus and Ecom high schools - primarily in grade 10 classrooms and among grade 10 students. This climate of academic disengagement was evident in: 1) frequent student absenteeism - a partial consequence of lax school attendance policies; 2) a dearth of student participation in class - due largely to shyness over speaking English in front of classmates; and 3) Poor student study habits, including a propensity to copy homework either from classmates or from the teacher's answers on the blackboard. Moreover, students frequently subverted the educational mission of the school by lying to teachers, privileging form over substance in their written work, and using the wantok system to exact favors from classmates in positions of authority.

Students resisted school authorities in both subtle and violent ways. The beating of Mr. Kanda at MPHS was an astonishing outbreak of student fury and revenge at a teacher whom they felt had treated them unfairly. One of the contentions of this thesis is

that this level of student resistance could only be possible if the ways in which students imagined themselves in relation to authorities in their lives were changing, and if many of them felt they had another alternative lifepath ahead of them - returning to their natal villages. In the next chapter I will offer explanations for student underachievement and resistance in Manus, and will emphasize that they were a rational response to students' perceptions of a limited opportunity structure after grade 10, and the fact that most of them could return to their natal villages after high school. I will suggest that these student responses also may have involved the changing epistemologies of Manus youth - which led many of them to privilege the authority of their own subjectivity, (including their perceptions of a limited opportunity structure after high school), challenge their teachers, and value social experiences over academic success while in school.

# CHAPTER 6

## EXPLANATIONS FOR STUDENT ACADEMIC DISENGAGEMENT: "GRADE 10 NATING," "PLES I STAP," AND THE VALUATION OF SOCIAL EXPERIENCE IN HIGH SCHOOL

### Introduction

In this chapter I explore some of the bases for student underachievement and resistance in Manus high schools. I suggest that inconsistent school discipline, erosion of pedagogical authority, and lack of strong parental involvement left students with more freedom to construct the meanings associated with their schooling experiences. I argue, therefore, that an important part of students' academic disengagement was motivated by their own subjective assessment of the opportunity structure after grade 10 and the knowledge that they could return to their villages if they did not receive an offer. Students frequently told each other "grade 10 nating" (a grade 10 education is worthless) and "ples i stap" (the village is there). These motivations underlay many students' justifications to privilege social experience over academic success and "enjoy" themselves while they were in high school.

I begin the chapter with a discussion of quantitative findings on factors which affected students' academic performance - including student adjustment dilemmas in high school. I then turn to the effects of parents and family on school performance. While I acknowledge that parents could be a source of encouragement for students in school, I note several factors which militated against their influence in the school setting,

including a notion of "authority diffusion" offered by the Manus Secondary School Inspector.

Next, I discuss how many students rationalized their underachievement and pursuit of social experience in school by citing the inhospitable post-secondary educational and employment opportunity structure. I then turn to an important part of this justification - the option for most students of a future life in their natal villages. Low-achieving students at both high schools frequently told each other "ples i stap," (the village is there) for them to go back to if they did not do well enough to get a scholarship for further education. I try to show that students' "casual" attitude towards their studies, their resistance of school authorities, and pursuit of social activities within the school environment were rational responses given their subjective assessment of the utility of formal education in their future lives. A brief section at the end of the chapter describes salient features of student social life. In that section I argue that, in the uncertain post-secondary climate of 1995, high school was becoming valued as much for the unique social experience it offered as for its educational and occupational utility. Indeed, interviews revealed that many Manus students wanted to come to high school to "meet new friends" and to "see what high school life was like."

At the end of the chapter, I compare these students' adaptations with those presented by Shaw in his study of student subjectivity and academic disengagement in Taiwan (1996). I argue for similarities in the two cases and assert that the data presented in this dissertation may be seen as partly attributed to a new developing Melanesian personal subjectivity.

## Quantitative Findings on Factors Affecting Academic Achievement

In this section I present quantitative data on factors which affected the academic achievement of the students in the two high schools. These data are derived from student responses on the Manus Student Questionnaire and from school achievement records. Student achievement scores were calculated from the mean of their cumulative achievement in their four core classes (English, Math, Science, Social Science; I refer to this score as their "core mean"). Because of the issues around English language usage described above, in this section I refer to students' achievement in English separately. Because the criteria for achievement differed slightly in the two schools, direct comparisons between them on these measures were not possible.

First, several sex-based patterns emerged from the data, many of which were related to girls' greater willingness to speak English in school. Girls did significantly better than boys in English achievement, though there was not a significant difference between boys and girls in core mean achievement. In general, girls also did significantly better in English than in their core classes, and those girls who said they were shy to speak English did less well in their core classes. For boys there were no significant differences in these areas.

There were also differences related to where students went to community school - in a village or in town. Boys who went to community school in town did significantly better than their village peers in their core class, but not in English. Girls who went to community school in town did significantly better in English than their village peers and almost significantly better in their core classes. In addition, boys who went to

community school in town were more likely to have family members who had cash-paying jobs. For girls this relationship was not as robust. Though I did not collect data specifically on this question, it is likely that students whose parents worked in town had a greater exposure to English language usage in their homes - both directly from their parents and through media such as television.

It is also likely that students who went to community school in town did not struggle as much with adjustment problems in high school as their village counterparts. The latter group of students were constantly adjusting to the ways in which high school life differed from that of their natal villages. In this and the following chapter I describe several areas of high school student life which were markedly different from village life, and discuss how they posed dilemmas for students. These areas were locus of authority, language use, and the nature of friendships.

I also want to point out, though, that there were other, more subtle areas in which the routines of high school life differed from that of students' home villages. One example was time orientation. A grade 7 boy once complained to me, "Everything we do in school, we must follow time." Many students found it difficult to adjust to this orientation: Whereas in their villages, events tended to mark the passage of time; in school, time marked the passage of events. One grade 10 boy said that his brother back in the village often told him, "You in high school, time bosses you. In the village, we don't have time. Night, that's all."

In this section I have summarized some of the quantitative findings underlying student achievement patterns, and hinted at the adjustment dilemmas many students

faced in high schol. The clearest patterns involved girls' greater willingness to speak English and their higher achievement in English in school; and achievement differences between students who went to community school in town and in village settings. At the end of the section I foreshadowed the adjustment problems many students had in high school and briefly described difficulties in the area of time orientation. The remainder of this dissertation discusses more important adjustment dilemmas, including locus of authority and relationships with parents, identity dilemmas (including language use issues), and the role of friendships in self-construction. The next section discusses the functioning of parents and family in students' academic careers.

## The Role of Parents and Family in School Failure

This section begins with a discussion of the impact of family problems and parents on school failure. I will demonstrate that family problems such as sickness or divorce could have a negative impact on childrens' schooling. I will also show that parental involvement in high school students' educations varied greatly in Manus. Some of this variation was explained by the great distance between many students' natal villages and the high schools. Some of it was also due to different levels of parental involvement in their childrens' education. The distance and the variation in levels of parental support meant that much of their childrens' approaches to schooling were formed in the schools themselves, in the company of their classmates and friends.

"Family problems" could have a negative impact on student achievement in school. These problems could involve a parental separation or divorce, which meant that

the student did not have a "gutpela sindaun" (good place to live) back in the village or in town - vital by all accounts for good living AND school success. Or a parent might have been cursed by an aunt or grandparent for a transgression such as not remitting, and the curse might have specified school failure or unemployment for the parents' children. One grade 10 leaver in Pere from Manus High 1980, said that when he came home after not getting his offer, his parents told him that when he was in grade 7, his father had gotten cross with his sister and she had cursed him. She had said that her brother's son would not get an offer and would come back to the village. Some students also had relatives or parents who were living on Bougainville Island, where a civil war still raged and were often consumed by worry for their safety. Interviewed students reported that these problems and worries could distract them from their school work.

Nevertheless, when most parents sent their children off to high school, they encouraged them to do well so they could get a job and help them in the future. Many students internalized this motivation, as reflected in student interviews like the following:

> PD: What do you think is the most important thing about high school?
> Student 1: [Ecom Grade 10 Male (CM:165)] I must finish grade ten and ... to go and get jobs to help our parents.
> Student 2: [Ecom Grade 10 Male (CM:121)] That's what our parents told us... to skul hard so we can get a job to help them, cuz they did their part when we were in the primary... When we were small they helped us - paid for our school fees (Fieldnotes 6/1/95).

Thus, as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 4, a powerful motivation for many Manus students in high school was to be able to remit money to their parents to pay them back for the hard work of raising them (TP: "Bakim hat wok blong papa na mama blong mi"). As mentioned in Chapter 4, the strength of this remittance-based motivation, as apparent in

student achievement, was related to birthplace. Younger siblings also knew that their older working brothers and sisters would most likely help them with money in the future if they needed it. Two low-achieving eighth graders at Manus High explained:

> Student 1: So all my brothers and sisters, they passed their school and they get offer.
> Student 2: So they are not, so like his parents, are not very worried. If he fail his school exam, because his brothers and sisters got offer, and he can stay home, and look after their ground, their crops and something, garden.
> Student 1: Another reason is they (his brothers and sisters) are living in another province. So I must stay in the village and look after all the things (Fieldnotes 6/4/95).

Within the student bodies of the two schools, students themselves said they saw a difference in the effort of students whose parents already had a source of money and those who did not.

Parents admonished their children to stay away from those classmates who misbehaved or were naughty (TP: "bikhet"). One student whose grades had steadily declined since he had been in high school said his parents told him when he was home,

> My parents say, "Don't follow all those boys who are usually naughty. You can't be naughty yourself." Because they usually say, "We will be wasting alot of money on you. You must listen to what your teachers say" (Fieldnotes 7/25/95).

However, once students were in high school, most parents performed a limited role. Some of this was inevitable, as the parents of quite a few students lived on outlying islands or on the western side of Manus island, where a trip to town could take 4-5 hours and over $50 in petrol. Some of this limited role also derived from the traditional stance of Manus parents with regard to education mentioned in Chapter 4 - that education is the job of the teachers. However, even parents who lived closer to the schools, or in town,

tended to leave schooling processes almost entirely to the teachers - unless, as stated above, their child came to them with a story of unfair punishment. A veteran teacher at Manus High said,

> ....many of the parents, they never see their child's report. I sent one child home with four Fs, and with that, there is little chance that he is going to get a pass on his grade 10 certificate; and it is good to get a pass. I said I wanted to see the parents, but they never came, and I think they never saw the report. Their children are supposed to bring it home (Fieldnotes 7/17/95).

Several students disclosed to me that their classmates who were doing poorly in school frequently tore up or threw away their report rather than give it to their parents. One parent, a successful civil servant in the provincial government, particularly regretted his own lack of involvement in his son's high school education:

> Parent: One [of our children, Jeremy] just completed his grade 10 last year. He didn't do well. To our surprise. Because in grade 6, in grade 6 five years ago, he came second out of Manus, not PNG, Manus. And when he didn't make - do well, after grade 10, I was surprised, as a father. So... something must have happened with him in high school... And then I summed up to me that - two things. One is myself. I realize that I was the - a contributing factor. I'm never at home, really. That father-son relationship was probably nothing. The other one is negative peer influence in the high school.
> PD: Did you have rules for your children when they were in community school?
> Parent: Well, perhaps that's... I TOLD my children that studying is important, but I didn't go out and enforce it. I didn't enforce it. I did not create in the home - I left it to them, whether they did it, or whether they didn't do it. But it's one thing that I'm sorry about - failing, I wasn't there.

The negative peer influence mentioned by this parent will be taken up in Chapter 7. This parent had sent Jeremy on to a private national high school outside Port Moresby at considerable expense.

> Parent: In all, his education in Port Moresby has cost me over K4,000 with transport. It's just because, as I said, I've neglected him. So, perhaps it's late, but I... try to make up in some sort of way... try to make him happy.

Thus, parents' influence on their children's experiences in high school varied. However, due to distance and other constraints in their own working lives, their influence was often limited to encouragement when the students were home. I assert that this limited parental participation, elaborated below, was an important part of the development of students' personal subjectivities which, as we shall see, led to academic disengagement and the development of an anti-academic peer culture.

## Authority Diffusion

Indeed, throughout the 1995 school year, many students, regardless of birthplace, did not follow their parents' advice in high school. The Provincial School Inspector called this disregard for parent's wishes "authority diffusion" - a local comment on the developing individualism of young people in Manus. Indeed the results of an in-class survey indicated that being away at high school may exacerbate this development. This survey, conducted in two MPHS grade 10 English classes, was a textbook exercise which required students to rank the ten following influences on their choice of future work in order of importance. The aggregate student rankings follow, from most important to least (N=60).

1) The wages paid for the job.
2) The challenging and interesting nature of the work.
3) Pleasant surroundings in which to work.
4) The opportunities for travel offered by the job.

5) The prestige of the job; respect from others.
6) The extent to which the job benefits the community.
7) The physical ease with which the job can be done.
8) The opportunities to meet people.
9) Job security.
10) Your parents wishes.

The fact that following parents wishes came last may provide support for the authority diffusion hypothesis. Moreover, the high ranking of the nature of the work and pleasant surroundings suggest the importance of immediate personal experience, which will be discussed in more detail at the end of the chapter. Survey data indicated that parental authority was a dilemma for many students. This was illustrated by their responses to the following question on the province-wide questionnaire:

> Question 10) A boy (or a girl) who has finished school is given a good job in Moresby. But his old mother does not want him to go. She says, "I am an old woman now, you had better stay here to look after me." What should he/she do? What do you think? (From Schwartz, personal communication)

Forty eight percent of surveyed students said the boy should go take the job and 45.4% said he should stay (6.6% gave other responses). (Students' responses did not differ significantly by sex on this item).

Students struggled with how to construe and honor the relationship with their parents - especially how to pay back their hard work if they did not get an offer or secure cash employment. One grade 10 student who had been on a declining achievement trajectory at MPHS (CM137) and now saw himself going back to the village said that he felt badly about taking too much money from his parents while he was in school or home on holiday. He said if his father gave him K20, he would take K10, "because I won't be

able to pay it back." Student dilemmas over parental authority and reciprocity were a part of their struggle in high school.

However, "authority diffusion" and parents' limited involvement in their child's high school careers meant that students themselves had more responsibility for constructing the meaning of their schooling experiences - and for their own identities. In the next section I examine how student-constructed meanings of the utility of high school affected their academic engagement.

## Student Rationales for Underachievement

### "Grade 10 Nating" (A Grade 10 Education is Worthless): Students' Perceptions of the Limited Opportunity Structure After Grade 10

Like the adults in Pere Village, high school students were uncertain of the likelihood of a return on their educational investment in 1995. Most students were aware of the limited employment opportunities open to them after high school. This knowledge was evident in the common expression, "Grade 10 nating," which circulated throughout the student body. Indeed, 98.4% of MPHS students and 94.7% of EHS students indicated on the questionnaire that they thought some students in their school were not "very busy with their schooling." One grade 10 MPHS boy elaborated on his questionnaire, "Because they think they won't get good result or an offer at the end of grade 10." In this interview segment, the boy, who was on a declining achievement trajectory, explained.

> PD: Do you think maybe one of the reasons students, you know, smoke and enjoy themselves in school, is because they KNOW that it's hard to get an offer?
> Student 1: (CM137) Yeah.

Student 2: (CM92) Yeah.
Student 1: Because nowadays in Papua New Guinea grade tens are nothing. My tambu (in-law) - the man married to my sister - she told me while I was in Lae, yeah, I went to Lae, and we had our dinner in the afternoon, and he was advising me, you know And he said that grade 10 is NOTHING (emphasis his). No use, if you finish your grade 10, even though you passed it. Yeah, that's no use. And I tell you an example. A man from Highlands, he went to school, he pass all his tests, exams, he get his doctor, what degree, and he become a doctor, but now, he's still at home doing nothing.
PD: Really?
Student 2: Useless.
PD: You guys are aware that the grade 10 results in Manus have been going down?
Student 1: Yeah.
Student 2: Yes.
PD: So maybe a lot of students here, do you think, maybe they think, well, it's hard, and maybe they say, well, I'll try, but maybe I should just enjoy myself while I'm here.
Student 1: That's it.
PD: That's it, huh?
Student 1: Yes.
PD: Well, I think it's hard, cuz there just aren't enough jobs.
Student 1: Just imagine. How many thousands of students we're competing with. Last year, about thirteen thousand something, grade 10s, they sit for the exam. And you just see, just imagine that 800 only, are qualified - are accepted. There are only 800, what, positions this year. Like, if people are employed, there are only 800 spaces. Just imagine then, 10,000, or 15,000 will go back home, doing nothing.
PD: I think it must be hard to be in your position.
Student 1: That's true. It would be lucky if we were born earlier. Then we'll have enough space. There will be enough space for us. But now, ohhh shit. There are more clever people who are university students who are doing nothing at home (Student Interview 7/27/95).

This interview segment illustrates these students' awareness of the paucity of educational and opportunities for students after grade 10. This evidence suggests that high school students employed a similar habitual way of thinking about the efficacy of knowledge and education as Pere villagers (discussed in Chapter 4) and that this Manus habitus was

being reproduced in the high schools. Furthermore, these students suggest that their awareness of the situation was leading themselves and some of their classmates to "try" while they were in high school, but to "enjoy" themselves while they were there - before they made their likely return to their villages.

A frequent saying that went around the lower achieving students in the MPHS 10p classroom was "Nox Bisi!" - short for "no ken bisi" in Tok Pisin, which loosely translates to "No worries" in Australian English, or "Don't worry about it" in American English. Students said this to each other as they "took off" from a class, copied homework assignments from each other or the teacher, or talked about the future.

Thus a frequent spoken rationale for low academic effort was that students wanted to "enjoy themselves" by going to town, telling stories, or smoking cigarettes or marijuana, or were "tired" and wanted to rest. High achieving students in both MPHS 10p and Ecom 10b confirmed this sentiment about their classmates:

> PD: Do you think there are some students here who are not trying their hardest?
> Student: [EHS 10b Male (CM160)] Some students, they just want to be in the high school and enjoy their four years. Staying and just sleeping around in the dormitories. After class, if they wish, just go and spin into town, and then just stay in the school. They just like to be in the school, for their four years (Fieldnotes 6/2/95).
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> * * *
>
> PD: So those boys (that run away from class), what are they thinking?
> Student: (Male CM167): They're not really serious - to come to school. Maybe they want to come to school just to bikhet around. Just doing those bikhets. They are not really thinking of school (Fieldnotes 8/4/95).

Interestingly, many of these students still entertained grand aspirations of work in the cash sector such as being a pilot or ship captain, which were seemingly unrelated to their academic performance (a topic which I will address further in Chapter 7). Many of them said they were "not worried" about the grade 10 examination and expressed confidence that they would do well. They seemed only partly aware of the way in which they and their classmates did not exert sufficient effort for academic success.

Two teachers, one at each high school, both from other provinces, commented on this ironic dual consciousness of many underachieving Manus students. They felt it had to do with a kind of Manus cultural arrogance:

> PD: So why do you think this happens, these students stay away from class?
> Teacher [MPHS Maths/Commerce Teacher and Asst. Head]: Oh, some of them, they think they don't need to come to class. Because they are from Manus, and before, when I first came here from Lae, Manus was at the top [in terms of high school achievement]. And these students, they were, I don't know, proud. They thought they knew everything already. And that they didn't have to go to class. They were smart already. They didn't have to do anything. There are many students with this attitude in 10p.
> PD: So how are Manus students different?
> Teacher: Manus students, they have a different attitude. They do not take in... listen to... what you say to them. They don't listen to you, to the teachers. They just go and do what they want. I don't know why. But in other provinces, students listen to you (Fieldnotes 6/26/95).

The Ecom second year teacher quoted below was well-liked by students, but was being worn out by the strain of teaching in Manus. In this conversation he agreed with several of the findings presented in this report thus far:

> PD: Why do you think the students don't come to class, don't work too hard. Is it like, it's too hard to get a job, so I might as well just enjoy myself while I am in school?

> Teacher: Manus ol i save man [Manus, they are smart men]. Yes, I think it is like that... they think, "Mi wokim laik blong mi" [I do what I want]. I don't have to go to class... I might as well enjoy myself... they can say, `ples i stap', or `home tech.'"
> PD: And also maybe they see alot of men coming back to the village who have been working before, but have decided to come back to the village.
> Teacher: Yes, I have seen that too. I think that could be a part of it. Why should I work so hard in school? ...Manus students are much more bikheted than in other places I have been - like Milne Bay. They usually don't follow the teachers' instruction, or don't obey the teacher. And also, they often misbehave in night study. Like if there are a couple of students trying to study, maybe some other students over here, they will be throwing stones at them.
> PD: So you think alot of students are not worried about their future?
> Teacher: That's it, I think they are not. They think, 'O, mi save pinis' [I already know]. Or, if they get some education, ol i save man [They are a smart man]. But really, they are not.
> PD: Do you get frustrated working here?
> Teacher: I get frustrated and it makes me sick... teaching here is wearing me down (Fieldnotes 7/31/95).

It is difficult to explain the origins of the saying "The Manus are smart men." Part of it, as mentioned by the first teacher above, might be related to the educational and occupational success enjoyed by many Manus people relative to men and women from other Papua New Guinean provinces. Another part of this Manus confidence is likely related to the continuing ability of the people of the province to provide for themselves through their subsistence technologies - and the continuing viability of village lifeways. One education official pointed out that this situation differed from many highland provinces where not only land claims but interethnic warfare could potentially block the future subsistence of young people. In sum, he felt that given the continued viability of Manus village subsistence lifeways, students in the province did not feel as much urgency to do well in school, and find jobs outside of their villages.

The Village is There (TP: "Ples i Stap")

The most ubiquitous rationale cited by students in explaining either their own underachievement or other students' attempts to subvert their academic efforts was that they could go back to their villages after they finished high school. Many underachieving students (even those with an earlier birthplace) said in interviews that it would be "okay" if they went back to their villages after high school - as long as they did productive work for their families there. In the absence of strong guidance from parents and consistent discipline from teachers, I believe this rationale developed into a virtual ideology of underachievement in the schools. This "pull" of the village and the issues underlying reabsorption into it will be explored more thoroughly in this section; linkages with student identity and peer influence will be discussed in chapter 7.

Students sometimes referred to returning to the village after grade 10 as going to "home tech," or being a "home scholar." The village was often included in things friends said to other friends to dissuade them from studying. When asked, "Do students sometimes tease serious students?" one above-average Ecom grade 10 boy replied (CM118):

> Yes, they usually come and say, "You study and you study and where will you go work? Where will you go? The village is there. The village is there. The village that belongs to us together is there. You can get work, but still, the village is there, for us together to go live there. When your work is finished, you will come live in the village. When you come to the village, I will have a house, I will already have everything there." Like, among us, there are plenty [who say this] (Fieldnotes 8/01/95).

One of the reasons students said this was because they had seen many adults eschew (or be fired from) jobs in the cash sector and come back to live subsistence lives in the

village where, as discussed in chapter 4, life was "easier" or "better." When asked about these adults, students said they weren't very old, but were "hambak liklik" (a little fed up) with "wokmani" (jobs). As for those adults, village life appealed to many students in MPHS and Ecom high because it was "easy," and they would have control over their material needs:

> PD: Are you both happy when you are in the village?
> Student 1: [EHS Grade 9 Male (CM157)] I am happy to live in the village because everything is in my hands. I don't need to look for money to go and buy things. If I want betelnut, I just go climb betelnut. I want kaukau, I go to the garden to get it. Like in town, you go and buy it. Spending money.
> Student 2: [EHS Grade 9 Male (CM148)] In the village, life is easier. You don't need money to survive. If you want food, just go to the garden and get kaukau, or something like that.
> Student 1: I think if I finish grade 10, and don't go to higher education, I'll go back and do gardening.
> Student 2: I'll go back and do fishing.

When these boys made their last statements about going back to the village, there was a positive tone in their voices. The following two high-achieving boys from Ecom 10b were explicit about the connection between being able to go home and the academic effort they saw in some of their classmates:

> PD: Do you think a lot of the students who are not worried about school, maybe they think, it is too hard, too hard to get an offer, and maybe they just think, what, when I'm at school, I'll just, what, enjoy myself. The village is there. We will go back to the village - home tech.
> Student 1: [EHS Grade 10 Male (CM157)] Ya... home tech. Yeah, some have that kind of thinking.
> Student 2: [EHS Grade 10 Male (CM167)]: Yeah, because nowadays in PNG, when you go home, in other countries, it's- you go home, life is difficult, but in PNG, you go home, life is-
> Student 1: Just easy, you know, easy going.
> Student 2: -life is easy. Because, everything, is at home. So that's why, people are not doing serious in school. You go back home, there's food

there, anything there, you can get. That's why they don't really think of school (Fieldnotes 8/4/95).

Other low-achieving students added that even though they thought they would go back to their villages after high school, it was still good to finish high school because maybe they could "learn something" that they could use in their future village life. This knowledge usually included their commerce course (so they might be able to run a family-owned trade store in the village) or practical skills (so they could build permanent houses, water tanks, or other needed structures in the village).

Most students who had grown up in town, however, said explicitly that they did not want to go live in their relative's villages after school. They said that living there was "too hard," that they weren't "fit enough" to do the work, or that it would be too "boring." However, questionnaire results indicated that virtually all village students had land back in their natal villages on which to build their own houses. Moreover, most interviewed grade 9 and 10 students from villages said they knew how to do almost all of the work in the village: They reported that did most gender-appropriate subsistence labor while they were home over the holidays. One MPHS grade 9 girl from Pere said the only kind of work village work she did not know how to do yet was: washing sago, making a Manus basket, and making a grass skirt. Most older boys said they knew how to do almost all men's work, except carving a canoe and building a house. The primary problem for them was that they were not "fit enough" to live in the village - not only to do the work, but to earn the approval of a potential wife's parents. One low-achieving ninth grade boy at Ecom said,

> You must be fit. You must be fit, you must be able to do all the heavy work in the village; carving a canoe, building a house, beating sago, all of it, for a woman's parents to approve of you (Fieldnotes 5/31/95).

But, they said, if they stayed there for a while and worked, they would get fit as time passed.

A more difficult issue for many students regarding returning to their village after high school involved the ridicule they would endure there. Indeed, previous educational research has indicated that this ridicule and the shame of not being able to pay back those relatives who had paid their school fees were serious issues for grade 10 leavers who returned to their villages (Weeks, 1978; Ahai and Faraclas, 1993). However, data collected for this research suggest that, though these issues posed dilemmas for students, their effects would likely be temporary: Interviewed students said they expected to be ridiculed and the objects of gossip for a few months and would probably roam around a bit during this time, but as long as they settled down soon and were willing to do village work, they would be reabsorbed into village life, even if they could not pay back the relatives who had paid their school fees. One high-achieving ninth grade boy at Ecom who had several siblings working in the cash economy described this process:

> Student: When you go out for further studies and then you fail, failed, and you come back home, you don't adopt the village life, you just roam around, people talk about you, and you don't do any work, you just sleep, get up, eat. In our village, in our customs, that's not good enough. Many that come back are like this for two or three months, then they change, and start to go into the bush to support themselves. When you first go back, people will talk about you. They will say, "He just went to school, and pinched his parents money, oh man, and he just came back to the village. He's just going around and looking for women." Something like that.

> PD: But if they're not going to pay back school fees; don't people really expect you to?
> Student: But if you go back and work, it is all right. If you do get a job, they don't force you to pay them back. But if you are a good man, you will pay them back (Fieldnotes 6/22/96).

A veteran teacher at MPHS from a Manus village himself said that many low-achieving students at the school primarily came to see what school life was like or to make friends and that, for many of them, backing their parents was not important:

> If they don't, it's okay. Their parents or relatives won't be cross. Maybe a little teasing, or later if something comes up, maybe a relative will say, "Hey, I paid your school fees," but as long as they help with village work, it's okay. They can go back. No one will be cross (Fieldnotes 7/17/95).

Questionnaire data supported this teacher's assertion. Question 5 asked students to name the four most important courses for their own future. Data analysis indicated that for boys there was a decline (though not a significant relationship $p=.48$) in the number of core courses (English, Maths, Science, Social Science) that appeared in this list as students moved through the grades. Courses with knowledge that could easily be applied in village settings, such as commerce and practical skills, were mentioned more frequently. This trend may suggest that many students were preparing themselves more for a future in the village than in the cash sector. For girls there was less of a relationship. The appeal of returning to the village was evident in the following comment by one average MPHS grade ten student. One of his classmates had just been expelled for excessive absences, and I said his classmate must be sad. This student smiled and said, "No, maybe he has a good place to stay [TP: "sindaun"] in the village."

The appeal of returning to the village also lay in two changes which were occurring there mentioned in Chapter 4: First, because of the erosion of competitive exchange, adults were not as entailed to as many relatives and could use subsistence fishing almost entirely to provide for their families; and second, village life was "better" from the standpoint of young Manus because so many modern amenities from town could be found there.

Sex-Related Differences. Questionnaire data also revealed sex-related differences in the appeal of returning to the village after high school and in adherence to parental authority. Girls seemed to go through a change during their school careers regarding what they would do if they did not receive offers for further training. In seventh grade, most girls said they would try to find work, followed by trying to self sponsor, then going back to work in the village. By tenth grade, the vast majority of girls said they would try to self-sponsor for further education. Perhaps a return to the village was not as appealing to girls partly because power disparities between men and women were still largely extant there. These were evident in the frequent wife beatings we either heard or heard of in Pere and in the lack of participation of women in public forums such as community government and parents and citizens' meetings. This is likely related to the fact that girls were much more likely to encourage each other in their school work - a practice which I will describe in more detail in the next chapter.

The Experiences of Pere Grade 10 Leavers. I draw here on several interviews I conducted with male Pere grade 10 leavers from the high school classes of 1980 - 1994 who did not get offers and returned to the village. Their readjustment to village life and future plans largely confirms the viability of a return to the village for high school leavers, but also illuminates some of the specific frustrations and contingencies involved.

Interviews with older grade 10 leavers confirmed the interview quotes with high school students concerning school leavers' eventual reabsorption into the village. One, who had graduated from Manus High in 1992, had not gotten an offer, but had gone to work in Moresby as a butcher. He had soon gotten into a fight with his boss, however, been fired, and returned to the village. He said:

> If you don't get an offer, or can't get a job, or if you want to stop working, it's all right, you can come back to the village, and your family won't say anything to you. There is plenty of work for you to do here (Fieldnotes 2/13/95).

A 1980 Manus High School graduate, who now had his own house (but no wife), said that when he was in school, he had wanted to go to another "center" like Lae, and learn carpentry:

> PD: But you didn't. You just came back to the village. Were you happy when you came back?
> Paliau: Yes. Because I have plenty of work here. Building the canoes [his father was a master canoe carver], working on houses, finding fish. There are plenty of young men from the village who go to the city centers. They go there, and they don't have work. They just go around, that's all. They just stay there.
> PD: Why?
> Paliau: Maybe they like the entertainment there - the t.v. or something. But they can't come back to the village, because they don't know how to do the work here. They don't know how to build a house, or carve a canoe (Fieldnotes 3/26/95).

Some of the younger grade 10 leavers, who had just come back to the village after finishing the 1994 school year, had a variety of responses to their new situation and plans for what they would do next. I next present short descriptions of the experiences of three boys.

Richard Kaluwin did poorly on the grade ten exam and had been planning on a return to the village for some time. His mother had no schooling, his father had died, and he had no working siblings. His mother had said on the village census that he should get work. Richard had done poorly in school and on the grade 10 exam. He said he was happy to be in the village in 1995. He played soccer in the village association and was learning heavy work, such as group fishing and house building with other men. He also frequently listened to reggae music with his friends. He said he might try to go find work in town once the soccer season was finished. At the time I left Pere, Richard was still in the village, "going around," and doing some subsistence work.

> Posendruan Pomat said he had wanted to go to high school because,
>
> I wanted to learn about more things, get more education. I wanted to meet new people, have new experiences (Fieldnotes 4/1/95).

Posendruan, also known as Peter, had no working siblings. His father could not recall what grade he had attained in school, while his mother went to school until grade 9. Both said he should stay in the village. Posendruan said he really did not like some of his teachers in high school and reported that some off them regularly hit himself and his classmates. When Posendruan did not get his offer, he thought he would just stay in Pere for a while and maybe later try to "self-sponsor" for further education. However, Paliau

Pokiap, a distant relative (whom I will discuss again in the conclusion), spoke with him and said, "it isn't good for you to just stay in the village and do nothing, because many boys who just stay, they turn to criminal activities. They ruin other mens' things, or they climb on top of peoples' houses, and climb inside girls' rooms and try to rape them." Paliau encouraged Posendruan to try to learn some "practical" work which could be used in the village - like being a motor mechanic or a carpenter. Paliau was trying to get Posendruan to follow him (and informally be his apprentice), as he did this work himself in the village, but Posendruan followed this arrangement inconsistently. Meanwhile, Posendruan said that one of the things he did not like about living in the village was that people constantly sent him around to get them things - especially his aunts. He said it was hard to have freedom in the village. When I left Pere in September, 1995, Posendruan was still in the village and was trying a popular new way of making money - raising chickens.

Kisokau Kusunan was the oldest in his family and had been disappointed when he did not receive his offer. His father went to school until grade 9 and his mother until grade 8. Both said he ought to get work. Kisokau partly blamed his teachers for his failure to get an offer whom, he said, did not explain things well enough. He said that there were many items in all four subjects on the exam which he had not seen before in class. While he was able to figure out many of the ones in Math and Science (his best subjects), he was at a loss to answer several of the English and Social Science questions. He said it was good to be "free" in the village.

However, Kisokau's parents were making plans with a relative in Lae for him to go there for "technical training." This was known as "self-sponsoring," where a parent or, in this case a relative, paid school fees for further training after grade 10. Kisokau said he wanted to pursue further training because he thought he would be good at doing something "technical," such as repairing cassettes, because he was good at math and science. He also said that he really wanted to pay back his parents hard work and therefore had to find some kind of work, because it was hard to get money in the village. Kisokau left Pere in July, 1995 for Lae and enrolled in a technical training course.

These boys reported that while they endured some teasing from people in the village for being grade 10 leavers, it was not very bad. When I asked these boys if they had worries (TP: "tingting") about their futures, they all said they did. Their primary worry was whether they would turn out well (TP: "kamap gut"). These boys had had aspirations in the cash sector while they were in school (and Kisokau still did). However, when I interviewed them in the village in May-June 1995, these aspirations had clearly been leveled somewhat. The most important thing they wanted at that point was their own house to live in (largely so they could eventually marry). All of them said a bush material house would "be okay" for them.

These interviews with Pere grade 10 leavers illustrate the difficulties some of them had when they first came back to the village: Having to accede to the authority of their parents and relatives (especially aunts); having to level their aspirations for a modern lifestyle; and having to learn additional skills, either in or out of the village, in

order to be useful to their families and come up well. Older grade 10 leavers indicated that, with time, they met these challenges and were happy to be living in the village.

Paliau Pokiap: A New Melanesian Man. I conclude this section with a description of a young Pere man who was a unique role model for many high school leavers who had come back to life in the village over the last decade: He successfully brought Western knowledge to the village to improve life - within the context of largely egalitarian village relations (he never sought renumeration for his services). A half-caste (Pere-Buka), Paliau Pokiap, age 34, dropped out of high school in Buka after grade eight, but then later went to vocational school for carpentry and got a job as a carpenter at the giant copper mine on Bougainville Island. However, once the civil war there erupted, he came back to Pere, his (maternal) village, and began to help people with a variety of construction projects there.

Paliau said that he had discovered fresh water underneath the village and had built three hand pumps with showers in different parts of the village. He built them from PVC piping and old Czechoslovakian hand pumps which he found at the town dump. He never sought payment for the projects, but was always assured of food and shelter from those people he helped. At the time of our stay in Pere, Paliau was showing men how to build more durable houses with a minimum of imported materials. He explained to me that he wanted to show the village men how to build their houses safely and easily. For example, he said that in the past, sometimes men carved notches with axes high up on the house frames, and they occasionally dropped the axe and it gouged someone's leg. So

he said he was showing them how to do things safely - like cutting the notches on the ground before the timber was raised into place.

At the construction site of a kitchen (TP: "haus kuk") he was helping to build in February, 1995, Paliau was a blur. He went from man to man, supervising, teaching, showing. Frequent calls of "Pali!" "Pali like this?" from the twenty or so men there filled the air. Paliau said he was motivated simply by the conviction that people should help other people. Though he did not have great personal wealth or a bloodline which linked him to ancestral chiefs, Paliau was "someone" in the village. He had fashioned his own syncretic identity which combined mastery of practical Western knowledge with local Melanesian social values. He, and others like him in other villages, were important role models for high school leavers.

## The Shifting Value of High School: The Importance of Personal Experience

Largely because of the paucity of educational and employment opportunities after grade 10 and students' awareness of the likelihood that they would return to their natal villages, I argue here that high school was becoming valued as much for the unique personal experience it offered as for its educational and occupational utility. This shift in the valuation of high school was apparent in the reasons students cited for wanting to come to high school and in the importance of social life and friendships within high school.

Students' Reasons for Wanting to Come to High School

Students in the two schools reported a mix of motives for wanting to come to high school. They wanted to come in order to: Pay back their parents' hard work, improve their skills so they could become a specialized worker, learn more about the outside world, and, most importantly (for the research questions at hand), experience "high school life."

As I mentioned in Chapter 4 and above, many students said the primary reason they wanted to come to high school was to do well and back the hard work of their parents. Indeed, this oft-cited rationale for education in Manus made it, in lieu of significant economic development, the province's primary "industry" (Carrier and Carrier, 1989). In addition, a smaller number of students said they wanted to go to high school to learn more about the outside world, to "improve their skills," or even to attain specific jobs or roles. Martin Pomat, a grade ten student whose parents were from Pere but now worked in town (his father was a community school headmaster at the naval base), said:

> When I was small, I saw those Navy and Army persons, and I used to admire them... I used to tell my pops, I wish I could be that, so my pops used to say, the only way is you've got to work hard, pass your grade six examination, go to high school, and from high school, you can go on to further tertiary colleges, and like this... And now he keeps on telling me to work even harder. To continue on (Fieldnotes 6/2/95).

However, most of the students interviewed (from all over Manus) said that, when they were younger, they had heard stories about high school from friends and relatives who had gone themselves. These students said they wanted to come mainly to "see what

high school life was like." One Titan grade ten student from one of the southern islands explained,

> Student: Because we don't usually come to town. We just stay in the village, you know? So when we go to school, it's like we have a chance to go to town. Like, the thinking of little boys is like that. All those little boys, they want to ride in a car, things like that.
> PD: What else (did you want to come to high school for?)
> Student: Like to see something come up - to reach your aim in grade ten, like being an electrician or something. They have this kind of thinking. Can I go to school, and get this kind of knowledge, you know? When school is finished, I will apply it - carpentry, or something... (Fieldnotes 7/25/95).

Most students, however, mentioned the social appeal of high school life:

> We come to school so we can know each other, so we can make friends with other boys, and we can improve our English at high school (Fieldnotes 6/4/95).

* * *

> My aim when I come to Manus High School is to know the school life... and know some of the friends that come from other parts of Manus... and to, I wanted to know more about sciences, to do better work in the future (Fieldnotes 6/28/95).

The two male grade ten students below also mentioned the appeal of possibly meeting a girlfriend outside of the purview of her parents or relatives, eating three good meals a day, and the prospects of having fun in high school:

> Student 1: We heard stories from students in high school. They came back and told us stories about high school. We were very interested to come to high school.
> PD: Like what? What kind of stories?
> Student 1: Oh... cars, all kinds of stories... plenty of girls [big laughter]. We were very interested to come to high school!
> Student 2: Good food in the morning, lunch, and for dinner. In the village, we eat two times, that's all.

> Student 1: Tell stories and stuff with all the high school boys... and do bad things and stuff [TP: "bikhet nabout"]... and find plenty of friends, and go around...

Students also mentioned wanting to experience other facets of town life, like "eye-shopping" and trying alcohol and marijuana. These quotations illustrate the point that high school was becoming valued for the social experiences associated with it as much for its education and training value. In the next section, I describe the importance of social activities in Manus High Schools.

## The Importance of Personal and Social Experience in High School

Given students' perceptions of the limited opportunity structure after grade 10, and the likelihood of their return to their natal villages, a good deal of students' time and energy in high school was devoted to the pursuit of social experience. Students consumed Western goods, media, and enjoyed the other diversions of town; talked about and enacted female/male relationships; drank alcohol, and smoked marijuana. In this section I describe these facets of student social life. In Chapter 7, I introduce another important part of students' increasingly subjective self-construction - in-school friendships. I describe how through these friendships, students mediated their identity dilemmas, and valorized an egalitarian village-based (invented) identity.

Consumption of Modern Goods in High School. High school offered some opportunities for students to consume modern goods on campus. Imported foods, such as tinned fish, rice, bread, and butter, were regularly served in the mess. Each school had a

store which sold soft drinks, ice cream, biscuits, and snacks. Videos were shown weekly as social activities. Many students had their own portable radios or cassette players in their dormitories, and school administrators occasionally brought special guests to the school for students to meet. During the 1995 school year, Miss PNG came to Manus High, followed several months later by two American atmospheric physicists there to explain the workings of their weather data station at the airport.

The Appeal of Town. Students from both schools liked to go to town both to "escape" from school and to sample, experience, or consume other modern goods and media. Specifically, students said they liked to go to town because: 1) It offered an "escape" from school routines and made them feel "free;" 2) They could see friends and relatives from outside school; 3) They could diversify their diet with foods not available at school; 4) They could "eye-shop" at stores, (a few could) buy goods, and (even fewer) steal goods; and 5) They could find betelnut, or buy cigarettes, beer, or marijuana (I discuss drug use below in more detail).

Students said they liked to go to town to "escape" from school or to "be free." There were also many students from outlying villages who had hardly been to town before and liked to see the various shops, cars, and modern conveniences there. When I asked a grade ten boy from Ecom how he usually spent his typical Saturday afternoon in town, he replied:

> Student: First I go to some kind of shop that is air-conditioned, because I am hot from going into town [a walk of over a mile], and I want to cool down. I usually go to the bank - PNGBC.

> PD: Do you have a passbook?
> Student: No [smiling], I just stay in the back. Then I go to the kai [food] bar across from Steamships, Kali Bay, to get a scone. It's less crowded than Steamships. Then I usually go to a store like Sunam Enterprises [a store which specialized in electronics, sports equipment, clothing, and office supplies]. Just look around. Then I find some friends or wantoks, and we just go around. Maybe get some ice cream. A container of ice cream or something. Then we come back, usually along the beach, because it is so hot in the middle of the day (Fieldnotes 6/22/95).

Indeed food was cited by many students as a primary reason they liked to go to town. Both high schools usually served the same food for each meal: scones (fried flour) for breakfast; bread with butter and tea for lunch; and tinned fish and rice for dinner. While younger students seemed pleased with this new diet of imported foods, older students tired of it. They complained about having "the same food all the time - tinned fish, and rice, and just one bun or something" (Fieldnotes 6/21/95). Sometimes students complained about not getting enough protein in the mess hall, but the main appeal of town with regard to food was the variety available there. Students either bought food, as mentioned above, found a wantok and asked them to buy food, or went to a wantok's or friend's wantok's house for food. These arrangements posed a burden, of course, on these wantoks who worked in town: One woman who worked as a secretary at Manus University Center, said she had stopped going to the central town market for her lunch, because she would end up spending all her money on her wantok's lunches. Nevertheless, good food (TP: "gutpela kaikai") was always mentioned prominently when I asked students on Mondays about their weekend.

Students also liked to go to town to "eye-shop" -especially at Papindo-, or, if they had money, to buy things. Some students, if they had no money, stole. Typically, students tried to find a wantok first:

> PD: What do you do in town?
> Student: [EHS Grade 9 Male] Oh, try to find a wantok, and get them to buy us something, like pens, or a notebook, or something (Fieldnotes 5/1/95).

A grade 10 Manus High boy said that if students could not find a wantok, they would steal - boys and girls alike. Items typically stolen included notebooks, pens, clothing, biscuits, drinks, and even tape recorders. Students typically put these items down their shirts and simply walked out of the store.

Stealing was also a major problem at the schools themselves. Students occasionally skipped classes to go to an empty dormitory to steal money, jeans, shirts, clothes, grassknives, shoes, or sneakers from other students (they would sometimes bleach the sneakers so they could not be recognized by their owner). Students used cigarettes to burn holes in other students' suitcases or grassknives to slash open bags. Students also stole school supplies, most typically equipment from the practical skills department (such as planers, hammers, and chisels). One student explained, "Sometimes those things grow legs and walk off" (Fieldnotes 4/27/95). For most students, high school was the first time they had lived so close to town with its surfeit of modern amenities, conveniences, and experiences. Trying these things (including stealing) was part of the social experience for which high school was becoming valued.

Male-Female Relationships. Though forbidden, relationships between girls and boys were fairly commonplace and the subject of much excitement and discussion at both schools. For many students, the prospects of finding a potential girlfriend or boyfriend out of the purview of parents or relatives was one of the primary attractions of high school. A grade 10 Manus High boy said,

> Many students are here because of the girls. To find girlfriends, and tell stories with their girl friends. They don't really care about their classes (Fieldnotes 6/26/95).

Student estimates of the percentages of students who had some kind of sexual relationship during the 1995 school year ranged from 30% to 90%. A short vignette illustrates their prevalence, accompanied by the note that the word "kaikai" in Tok Pisin refers to both food and sex:

> One of my friends and closest informants at Manus High, a Titan boy from an island to the south, had told me that he was going to miss a class that morning to go to town and find some food. When I saw him that afternoon in class, I casually asked him if he had found his food. A puzzled look appeared on his face, then he looked over at a group of girls in the corner of the classroom. Then I said, "In town." "Ah..." He said, a slight smile on his face, "Yes" (Fieldnotes 7/21/95).

Sexual concerns influenced behavior all over the high school campuses - even in the Manus High mess. Though assigned to mixed-sex tables, boys typically ate their food hunched over, with their head below the table's surface. I puzzled over this for three months. Though I questioned some girls about this, they invariably smiled somewhat smugly and simply said, "they are afraid of us." Some boys finally disclosed to me that they and their friends were shy to eat in front of the girls because they were afraid girls would make fun of the way they ate or, worse, find their mouths sexually unattractive.

Many boys were so confounded by the situation that they elected to stay away from the mess, and either go hungry, feign sickness and get friends or wantoks to bring them food in the dorm, or escape to town and find food there.

Students maintained rigid divisions between the sexes at both schools. Boys and girls invariably sat on opposite sides of the classroom and worked in same-sex groups. At Manus High, boys and girls routinely took different routes to their classes on campus - the boys peeled away from the girls to go around a certain courtyard to the left instead of with them to the right.

The motives for sexual relationships also seemed to differ by sex. Though gender and cultural differences mentioned earlier inhibited collection of data on female experience, the few interviews conducted with girls indicated that they had more romantic motives for these relationships than boys. One grade nine girl at Ecom said,

> As for me, I want to have a boyfriend especially for love. So I can have a family - you know? And tell him, "You are my boyfriend, don't think you can have something sexual with me." Because a friend is there to share love. That's the most important thing (Fieldnotes 6/21/95).

This interview was conducted in a group setting with five other girls, and it should be mentioned that as soon as this girl mentioned the word "love", her friends exploded with uproarious laughter. Most likely because she was citing a conspicuous construct of Western social relations.

Boys on the other hand, typically had more short-term objectives. When asked in a group setting if he and his friends had girlfriends, one grade ten Manus High boy said,

"mipela sa capsidim na runaway" [we usually ejaculate (capsize) and run away], after which he and HIS buddies exploded into uproarious laughter.

Indeed sex was a hot topic. Boys not only talked about sex frequently, they drew their own pornography. Once during a storying session with grade ten students in a Manus High dormitory, a popular western movie actress came up. I said, "gutpela meri" (good woman), after which a grade ten boy said, "gutpela abus" (good meat).

Despite school rules that said that boys and girls could not be alone together at any time during the day or night and the possibility of being "bashed up" by a cousin of a girlfriend, sexual activity still went on in secret. One Manus High boy explained:

> Boys having sex with their girlfriends, they usually do it during the weekends. Daytime in the classroom. But usually when a girlfriend and a boyfriend - when they want to have sex, there must be a security (guard), to see if somebody's coming. Someone to look after them like a wantok or a friend. Because once you are caught, I tell you, you'll be expelled straight away (Fieldnotes 6/28/95).

Other students reported that they frequently spied on such classroom interlopers - and sometimes got belted for it. There were also a select few students at Manus High school who, it was reported, mixed a special potion of lime and other secret ingredients, put it on their faces, and turned invisible so that they could go visit and have sex with their girlfriend without anyone knowing.

Female grade ten students at Manus High reported that ten girls had gotten pregnant at their school over the previous three years, and all had gone home to their villages. During the 1994 school year, a student hid her pregnancy from her classmates, then gave birth outside the dorm in the middle of the night and tried to suffocate the baby

in a hole under a tree. But some of her classmates found her, and the baby survived. It was from her uncle. As will be shown below, girls spent considerable time and energy admonishing each other to avoid these situations.

Sexual relationships and the persistent talk about them constituted an important, though latent, area of student social life. Their appeal was different for boys and girls - a situation which could lead to considerable anxiety for students of both sexes. This section has also described some of the ways in which girls and boys experience high school life differently. Indeed, though boys and girls generally struggled with the same dilemmas over academic engagement and identity in high school, the particular content of these struggles differed somewhat. These differences will be discussed in more detail in chapters 7 and 8.

Drug Use. Students in the two high schools consumed both alcohol and marijuana. Though alcohol was banned in the province, students occasionally were able to buy it on the black market. They also occasionally distilled their own alcohol from a mixture of pineapple, yeast, and sugar. This concoction was known as "J.J." (Jungle Juice), and was powerful enough to tranquilize a horse. Marijuana use was more prevalent. Manus High School students estimated that between 60-90% of both boarding and day student males smoked marijuana at least once a week. These boys said a smaller number of girls smoked as well, but they were unable to give an estimate of how many. When I asked one Manus High School grade 10 student if it was hard to get marijuana in town, he responded,

> Oh, please, it's not hard to get. Because now, some of the boys in the dormitory have their own dealers in town, and in other places. They used to sell them over holiday, and they will sell it during the school year.... As for me, I have one who is my aunt's son. So I used to go with him, and get drugs from him. So last Saturday, we went to the highway, and walked onto the highway, and we took two rolls (joints) on our way out. It's good. Nice. But one thing, bad about it, if you smoke like this, there are different types - One is for hungry. It will make you very hungry. It will make you want to eat two pots of fries - if there is a pot in front of you, you will finish that. But, you know, when you smoke, you will get good feelings (Student Interview 7/27/95).

This student reported that in town, two kina would buy enough marijuana to make two joints.[1] Other students reported that their classmates usually smoked marijuana on the weekends, but sometimes they would smoke it during the week, in the dormitory, and even before going to class. One grade ten boy said, "they smoke marijuana and they feel comfort - comfortable, and they come and enjoy class."

Thus, a great deal of students' attention and energy was devoted to pursuing personal and social experiences: consuming Western goods and media both on school grounds and in town; talking about and enacting female/male relationships; and enhancing experience through the use of drugs. In-school friendships, another vital high school social experience, will be taken up in detail in the next chapter.

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[1] Though I heard indirectly about Marijuana usage at Ecom High School, I was unable to collect any reliable data on the subject.

## The Development of Subjectivity and the New Authority of Direct Personal Experience

This chapter may be framed in an important aspect of the cultural change in Manus mentioned in Chapter 2,[2] and of the "authority diffusion" mentioned above: students' developing personal subjectivities.[3] As I recounted in Chapter 2, anthropologists of Melanesia have asserted that the Western model of economic self-interest has weakened the relational links which provided the basis for (truly) traditional identities. Melanesians now have increasing responsibility for and choice in the creation of their own identities and relationships. In this sense, self-realization and the determination of the "goods" (Taylor, 1989) worth pursuing in life have become more subjective processes: They are less determined by the place of the individual in a web of relationships and by inherited collective values and goals, and more determined by relationships entered into by choice, and by direct experience. I argue that there were two facets of this new subjectivity which were apparent in the data collected for this study: an epistemological shift away from inherited or collective knowledge and towards knowledge generated by the direct experiences or perceptions of the self; and a new valuation of experiences and freely-entered social relationships which played an increasingly important role in self-creation.

I hinted at the first of these two facets in Chapter 4 in the sixth grade PCS teachers' quote that students walking around in the village late at night responded to her

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[2] Such as shifts from collectivist to individualist orientations in politics, religion, and economics.

[3] I use the word here to mean "relating to or determined by the mind as the subject of experience" (Merriam-Webster 1986)

question of why they were not sleeping by saying "it is my wish." I also want to mention here a quotation from a frustrated Pere Community School parent. He said,

> "Now the boys don't listen to their parents. They don't listen. They just play, and then sometimes there are fights. They should listen to their parents. They should learn how to build canoes and this sort of thing (Fieldnotes 1/3/95).

I believe these quotations are suggestive of this new subjectivity in Manus which affected academic engagement at the primary school level.

Shaw (1996) described a similar situation in his recent ethnographic study of the effects of Taiwanese high school students' developing "radical" subjectivities on academic engagement. Somewhat like Melanesia, Taiwan had a collectivist traditional social orientation. Shaw argued that a gradual weakening of the social fabric and in the social bases for identity formation meant that many Taiwanese students had begun to ascribe a legitimacy to their own subjectivity: "A way of knowing that makes direct experience the final arbiter of `good'" (1996, p. 212). He reported that for many students in the high school under study, academic goals were at risk of becoming secondary to "the more immediate goals that provide heightened subjective experiences in the here and now" (1996, p. 202).

The situation in Manus with regard to changing social relations and identities bears some resemblance to the one Shaw describes in Taiwan. Indeed, one Pere grade 10 leaver from 1980 said,

> Now, high school students are more bikhet. They smoke cigarettes, or smoke marijuana. Drink beer. Back when I was in school, the Board of Governors was much more strict. If you smoked, you'd be expelled straight away (Fieldnotes 3/19/95).

Another older grade 10 school leaver living in Pere said that all of the younger school leavers who had recently come back to the village were "bikheted." When I asked him to define "bikhet," he said,

> I don't know, someone who doesn't want someone else to tell them what to do. They want to do things their own way (Fieldnotes 1/10/95).

Although I did not explicitly collect data on the historical increase in "bikhetedness" in Manus I believe the data presented above and in this chapter offer support for the notion that the bases for personal identity were changing in Manus, and that these changes were apparent in the behavior of high school students.

I argue that the way in which students justified their underachievement can be explained partly by the development of a new personal subjectivity in Manus: Many students attributed more authority to their own subjective perceptions of the limited opportunity structure after grade 10 than to their parents' and relatives' admonishments to do well in school. They adopted this perception as part of their rationale for underachievement in school. Another part of this rationale was the widely-shared sentiment among students that, if they did not get their offer, they could go back to their villages and live their lives there. Indeed, while this was not the primary aspiration for these students, it was an adaptive stance they took in response to their perception of the limited opportunity structure outlined above. We will see in the chapter on high school identity and student culture to follow that this orientation underlay an egalitarian village-based identity which was valorized throughout the student culture and had significant implications for the academic engagement of many students.

A possible interpretation of the students' voices presented in this chapter, then, is that in one subjective move, many students privileged their perception of the limited opportunity structure and justified enjoying themselves in high school because, as we shall see in the next section, their villages were there for them to return to when (and if) they graduated. Importantly, this same complex of factors served to justify student resistance towards school authorities. As students attributed authority to their developing selves, they experienced an unprecedented feeling of equality with their teachers - a feeling which flourished in the environment of inconsistent discipline (and eroded pedagogical authority) in the two schools. This nascent feeling of equality with teachers contrasted with the schools' authoritarian logic (and occasional corporal punishment) and created a situation of friction between teachers and students. The friction was apparent in students' blatant resistance to teachers' authority and found especially violent expression in the beating of Mr. Kanda.

## Conclusion

This chapter has offered a complex of explanations for student underachievement and resistance in Manus. The data indicated limited support for the Carriers' education-employment-remittances relationship: A fair predictor of low-achievement was whether students had an extant remitter in their family. Some students also mentioned family problems as a factor in their underachievement. Teachers and parents reported that a lack of parental involvement and "authority diffusion" was another important contributor to low achievement. I have tried to argue in this chapter that a related factor in the

academic disengagement and resistance of some students in the high schools could be attributed to a developing personal subjectivity in Manus youth. This subjectivity ascribed a new authority to the experiences and perceptions of the self and privileged experience for experience's sake. This subjectivity partly motivated many young Manus to say they wanted to go to high school for the unique social experience it offered and, once there, to privilege the pursuit of these social experiences over academic success. Combined with an erosion of "pedagogical authority" (related to the diminished opportunity structure and nationalization of the teaching staff) in Manus, this subjectivity also led students to experience an unprecedented feeling of equality with their teachers which, in the authoritarian school climate, led to varying degrees of student resistance. These rationales for "enjoying themselves" and resisting teachers were partly motivated by students' perceptions of the limited opportunity structure after grade 10, to which they ascribed authority, and the fact that most of them knew they could return to their natal villages when and if they finished school.

In this light, school success was a path which, with its requirements of hard work, rigid conformity to rules, (as we shall see in the next chapter) assumption of a foreign identity, and consequent ridicule by classmates, paled in relation to the alternative: returning to their natal villages after high school to work as subsistence fishermen, gardeners, or small-scale merchants. Boys, however, were more likely than girls to say they would return to their villages if they did not receive an offer. Provided these school leavers endured a few months teasing, and eventually provided subsistence labor for their families, they would be reabsorbed into village life and their school-fee debt to their

parents would be, for the most part, overlooked. In this sense, student academic disengagement must be seen as a rational response by students to their perceived life chances.

Chapter 7 will examine the issues of identity inherent in students' dilemmas over English language usage, academic effort, and the pull of their natal villages. It will describe how in-school relationships between students functioned as a social field to mediate these dilemmas, and influence their academic engagement and developing selves. It will also examine the experience of higher-achieving students in the two high schools: the ridicule they endured from their classmates, attempts to "pull" them down, and their struggles to preserve their academic aspirations and social identities in the face of these pressures.

# CHAPTER 7

## THE SOCIAL COST OF ACTING "EXTRA:" HIGH SCHOOL AS A SOCIAL FIELD FOR THE NEGOTIATION OF MELANESIAN PERSONHOOD

### Introduction

"It's better to be from the village than from town" (MPHS Grade 10 Male).

* * *

[EHS 9b 4/28/95] About 18 boys and girls were in the Ecom 9b classroom quietly chatting just after lunch. They were waiting for their teacher to come for their next lesson. I asked a group of boys if some men were still beating saksak by the creek. Some of the boys said yes, they were, and then Popot and Kisokau had the following exchange. Popot is a strong powerful boy who often plays the role of class clown. He was born in Talan but his mama married a man from outside the village, and he grew up in town. Kisokau is from Talan. Both are below average students. Like virtually all student conversations in school, this exchange took place in Tok Pisin:

Popot: I beat sago in the village two weeks ago.[1]
Kisokau: You did NOT! [smiling, but loudly coming after him, and play punching him].
Popot: Yes I did, and I went fishing too! We caught fish and took them to market! [getting excited].
Kisokau: Nonsense [TP: "giamon"] [playslap].
Popot: Yes, I did! Two weekends ago! Peter was not there! We went out at night to spear fish.
Kisokau: Nonsense [slap, with slap back].
Popot: Yes we did! But we didn't get any, so we went out the next morning, in the early morning, and I got plenty of fish with the spear gun, and then [with big animated hand and body motions now, jumping around the classroom, in front of his audience of about 18 boys AND girls], we put the sail up [does the motion], and took them to the market -- barter system! [Laughs and delighted gurgles from the audience].
Kisokau: No, you didn't.

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[1] The process of preparing the pulpy trunk of the sago tree for consumption as a starchy staple.

PD: No, you're a town man [laughter from the boys].
Mike [another grade 9 student]: Em giamon.
Popot: [Getting extremely exercised now, he is leaping around, using quick stabbing motions with his hands to help him describe spearing fish, beating sago, putting up the sail, poling a canoe. His voice is very loud and excited.] I did! I did! I caught fish with a gun, and brought them to market, and exchanged them -- that market at, at, Patusi!
Kisokau: Nohong.
Popot: Yes! At Nohong!

In this exchange, Popot, known by everyone present to have grown up in town, asserted that he had the competencies of a village man, and Kisokau, who WAS from Talan, and DID have those competencies, playfully challenged this assertion. Later Kisokau and another boy said they thought Popot was showing off in front of the girls - he wanted them to think he could do those things. Several weeks later when I interviewed Popot at his family's home in the Pere settlement in Lorengau, he pointedly told me that Pere was his true home of origin (TP: "as ples stret").

* * *

"I want to go to Hollywood so I can see Jean Claude Van Damme with my own eyes" (EHS Grade 10 Male).

In this chapter I describe how Manus high schools function as social fields for the mediation of students' academic engagement and developing identities. High schools in contemporary Papua New Guinea are gateways to potential futures in the cash economy which entail assumptions about relationships and personal identity which may contrast with those of students' home worlds. Thus, I argue in this chapter that high schools in contemporary Papua New Guinea must be understood as interaction spheres where students' possible selves are shaped in part by their relationships with teachers, media, peers, friends, and blood relatives. I focus in this chapter on the effects of peer relationships and in-school friendships, which were relatively new social forms in

Melanesia. I argue that the latter were acquiring their own worth in the schools, for affective support, companionship, and self-construction - further evidence of the developing personal subjectivity among Papua New Guinea youth discussed in the previous chapter.

One of my primary assertions in this chapter is that, in the knowledge of their likely return to their villages after finishing school and in order to maintain worth and function in the interaction sphere of the school, a critical mass of students were valorizing an egalitarian village-based identity. This was largely the same group of students who were described in Chapter 6 as valuing social experience over academic success in school. This identity had moral value and was similar to that being constructed in Pere Village in a similar situation of powerlessness. Through the interactions of students in the schools, facets of this identity became normalized throughout the student culture. While students still maintained a rich, contradictory array of fluid identities and aspirations (such as going to Hollywood to see movie stars in person), these were grounded in this village-based identity. Most importantly, an egalitarian component of this identity was a vital part of the anti-academic student culture being produced in these schools - it provided the moral and ideological basis for students to restrain the achievement and aspirations of their classmates.

Accordingly, the ongoing construction of this village-based identity within the student culture entailed the constant surveillance of peers for signs of betrayal of its implicit egalitarian social orientation: Most commonly, students criticized their classmates for adopting behaviors which were construed as appropriate for a modern (or

European) lifestyle. Students construed these behaviors, and school success, as leading to a job in a system of hierarchical status positions and sometimes conflated them with their own constructions of white identity. These behaviors and their implicit social orientation contrasted with those of school failure, which was seen as returning to the village with its dominant (though eroding) ideology of (a constructed) Melanesian egalitarianism. Thus students particularly teased, criticized, and ostracized classmates whom they perceived were acting "extra," either through their behavior, efforts in school, or aspirations. These students were seen as breaching the egalitarian code within the student culture. I use Sykes' label of "contestations of a process of hierarchization" (1995, p. 193) to describe these behaviors.

Most importantly, many higher achieving students found that their peers and friends made judgements about how much academic effort they would tolerate. The situation created dilemmas for these students regarding their relative valuation of academic achievement and in-school relationships. While some high achieving students adopted strategies to succeed in school within this anti-academic climate, others admitted that they were curtailing their academic effort, cutting their classes, misbehaving, or smoking marijuana partially in order to gain popularity with their peers.

Therefore, in the chapter's first section I sketch the organization and character of social life in the high schools. In the next section I describe the egalitarian village-based identity which was valorized in the two schools and how it was used as a basis for the criticism of classmates who were seen as acting "extra," or "expensive," in the areas of language use, dress and consumption, and work behavior. I next discuss how students

also criticized their classmates for academic effort or aspirations which ultimately showed that they were trying to be "better," or "above," their lower-achieving peers. Finally I show how some of the higher-achieving students in the two schools were responding to this climate of intense peer scrutiny and emphasize how difficult it was to be a "good" student and person in Manus high schools in 1995.

## The Organization and Character of High School Social Life

This section sketches the role of friendships in the social organization of the student culture. In Chapter 6, I asserted that an important factor affecting student academic engagement had to do with how students were resolving dilemmas about maintaining their student role in the knowledge of their likely return to their natal villages. I argued that students were privileging social experiences over academic success in high school largely because of the authority of their own subjective perceptions of the limited opportunity structure after grade 10 and of a valuation of experience for its own sake. I tried to emphasize that this was a rational response given their perceived life-chances. This section describes one of these important social experiences in high school which students valued - making friends. As mentioned earlier, meeting friends was one of the primary reasons many students said they wanted to come to high school. Throughout this chapter, I discuss how these friendships affected students' academic engagement and developing identities.

Student social life was for the most part conducted in same sex groups. As I discussed in Chapter 6, the schools had rigid rules governing male-female relationships,

and a boy and girl walking around together during the day could invite suspicion from school authorities - and perhaps a beating from the girl's male relatives in the school. The only social occasions when boys and girls were together in the open were large school-sponsored entertainment events.

Students spent time with different kinds of peers and friends throughout the day. When I asked a grade nine Ecom boy to write down the different groups of students in his class, he hesitated, then explained,

> Sometimes we go around with our classmates; sometimes we go around with our wantoks, sometimes we go around with our dormmates (Fieldnotes 5/23/95).

Thus, most students had several friendship groups with whom they spent time. Interviews and observational data which follow indicate that in-school friendships had primarily subjective value and thus differed from the instrumental reciprocity which was inherent in Manus trade friendships. When I asked the Ecom ninth graders in an in-class survey to list the things they liked most about going to high school, friendship was the most common response for girls (with "learning" second); and was the third most common response for boys (after "learning" and "religion"). Moreover, especially for boys, these friendships included a high percentage of non-relatives: 81% of boys and 46% of girls included one or fewer relatives when asked to list their five best friends (sex-based differences will be taken up in more detail later in the chapter). Though the subject will be explored later in more detail, I should mention at this point that wantok relationships were special in certain ways: wantoks could ask each other for significant

favors and frequently shared secret ambitions which could be the source of teasing from non-related friends. I will return to this distinction in a later section.

As I described in Chapter 6, student social life was conducted in and around the dorms, around campus, and in town. As in the village, students' primary form of entertainment was conversation. Topics were far-ranging, though they often included stories from students' villages, teaching one another bits of indigenous language, sports (especially Australian rugby), gossip about boyfriends or girlfriends, trading opinions on various popular songs and movies, and, as I will show below, gossiping about other students.

Life in the boys' dormitories was characterized by ongoing play, relaxation, and joking. The one grade 10 boys' dormitory in which I spent a great deal of time seemed an enormously fun place for students: Play wrestling and joking abounded. Smaller relatives or friends venturing into the dorm might find themselves in a headlock, then somersaulted onto a bunk, much to the delight of the older boys. Boys chewed betelnut, others asked for it, were told there was none, then play-searched for it, while other pairs of friends strolled by holding hands - all in time-honored Melanesian fashion (See Mead, 1930). Other students sat on their bunks, carved fishing guns, read, or slept. At one point in the school year a boys' dorm at Ecom even had its own homemade snooker table (a British billiards-like game) fashioned from plywood and cloth, with sharpened sticks as cues, and marbles as balls. This all generally went on to a backdrop of popular music, typically reggae (Lucky Dube and Ziggy Marley were both very popular), or popular music from America (The Eagles or Michael Bolton), Papua New Guinea (Keni Lokas -

from Manus, or the Reks Band from Morobe Province), or Irian Jaya (revered because of the sweetness of the singers' voices).

Much of this play-filled atmosphere spilled over into the classrooms during the school day. Students frequently threw small rocks at each other or out the window at passers-by. Male students frequently stuffed gheko lizards, live or dead, down the shirts of smaller boys or, if they were really daring, girls.

I will show throughout this chapter, however, that student social relations did more important work. Through them, students negotiated what kinds of practices and identities were "good" within the student culture and thus how, what, and whom they and their peers were to be in post-colonial Papua New Guinea. In the next section, I describe the valorized village-based identity which became idealized within, and circulated throughout, the student cultures of the two high schools.

## The Valorization of an Egalitarian Village-Based Identity in School

> Student 1: [MPHS Grade 10 Male (CM160) Parents grew up in Pere - he grew up in town] There is a saying here, "Village students are better than town students." Because we grew up in town, and towns are like European societies, you know? So-
> Student 2: [MPHS Grade 10 Male (CM108) Grew up in a coastal village on Baluan Island] They think they don't do works alot, they just eat.
> Student 1: Our parents, they just buy things from the store, and we just eat. We just go to school, come back, do small work, that's all.
> Student 2: Don't know how to make gardens, or sharpening things like canoe paddles (Student Interview 6/2/95).

I argue in this section that in order to maintain worth in high school, while knowing they would likely return to their villages once they finished, students valorized a

village-based identity. Implicit in this identity was an egalitarian ethic which privileged collectivism over individualism.[2] This is not to say that students did not consume "modern" goods or media or entertain aspirations of achieving a modern lifestyle - many did (though they were often unrealistic), and it is important to acknowledge that these students and aspirations were fluid and somewhat contradictory - truly conditions of living in a Papua New Guinean modernity (Gewertz and Errington, 1995). However, my argument in this section is that these contradictory desires were grounded in this egalitarian village-based identity. This was evident in the fact that this identity was imbued with moral weight and was seen as "good." The close identification many students made with their home villages was evident in the way one grade 10 boy spoke about returning to his village after finishing school: "We will follow the lives of our people" (TP: "Mipela bai bihainim laip bilong mipela"). I argue that this identity was at the core of the anti-academic student culture in the high schools and that it included norms regarding language usage, dress, work, religion, academic practice, and aspirations. As Fordham discovered in her ethnography of underachievement in an urban American high school, the alternative identity circumscribed within the anti-academic student culture constituted an idealized prestige system, which contrasted sharply with the expectations of students in school (1996). Thus students in both contexts could

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[2] This collectivist orientation was ostensible in many ways, some very subtle. Often when I asked a question to a student in a group, the student would say, "We don't know," suggesting that she or he was linked to her or his classmates by some collective consciousness.

obtain status within the student culture while resisting the academic mission of the school.

This valorized egalitarian village-based identity was apparent in many of the normalized behaviors of students on campus and in their criticisms of their peers. Implicit in many aspects of this valorized village-based identity was a wide gap which students inferred between the behaviors, practices, and knowledges which were appropriate for Melanesians (especially given their own perceived life-chances), and those which were appropriate for white people (and in some cases, Japanese). The norms of this idealized student identity were generally framed within a constructed egalitarian ethic, wherein inappropriate behaviors were labeled with words which suggested hierarchical relations. I will show in this section that the idealized student identity in the schools involved norms regarding: 1) language usage (speaking indigenous languages or Tok Pisin); 2) dress and conspicuous consumption (not wearing new or expensive clothes; and for girls, eschewing makeup; 3) work (not shying away from physical work); and 4) religion (not taking a blessing which would ensure individual salvation). Aspirations were implicitly tied into all of these domains, as students who exhibited these behaviors were thought to want to "be like" an "other" person. Specific norms regarding appropriate academic effort are discussed in the next section.

The quotations below indicate that students could be seen as betraying this idealized identity if they adopted behaviors, ways of speaking, and aspirations which were associated with modern lives in the cash sector - and often with white people. These students were perceived as acting "extra," "fancy," or "expensive." These

criticisms indicate that these violations were associated with aspirations of obtaining hierarchical status positions and were thus breaches of the egalitarian tenet of the valorized student identity. Thus many high school students faced dilemmas about how their possible selves would be evaluated by their peers - especially, if those selves involved integrating particular elements of Western identities or, as we shall see, academic success. I want to emphasize that this valorized village-based student identity had a moral basis: It was anchored in the same claims to a somewhat invented "traditionality" as those made in Pere Villagers in Chapter 4. As Pere Villagers said it was "bad" to have to use too much money in their lives, so these students felt it was "bad" to aspire openly to a job in the cash sector. Both groups of Manus people adopted such stances to maintain worth in situations of relative powerlessness.

Language Use

In Chapter 5 I presented data which indicated that, for many students, issues over English language use had a strong impact on their in-class participation. Students reported that they were afraid that if they made a mistake in their English, other students would make fun of them. Here I introduce evidence which suggests that these issues were also related to student identity dilemmas. Contrary to school regulations, students most commonly spoke Tok Pisin on campus. Tok Pisin was also used in the Parents and Citizen's meetings of the two schools and in the evening prayer services in the Ecom dormitories. Students sometimes spoke their indigenous languages with their relatives on campus. English was rarely used outside the classroom, and when it was, it was often

in a form of play talk, most frequently imitating the accents of Western movie stores (often Chuck Norris, Sylvester Stallone, or Jean-Claude Van Damme) or, occasionally, Australians. However, as the MPHS grade 10 male student (CM108) below suggests, excessive English language use invited criticism (the interview, like virtually all of the student interviews, was conducted in Tok Pisin):

> PD: Do village students sometimes make fun of the way town students dress?
> Student: Yes, or the way they act... if they try and act fancy.
> PD: Fancy?
> Student: Like you [smiling].
> PD: Like a white man?
> Student: Yes [nodding] maybe the way they speak or something.
> PD: So can you give me an example?
> Student: [Pause] You're trying to talk like a white man (Fieldnotes 6/26/95).

The next day I asked this student to elaborate:

> PD: So, yesterday you told me that sometimes students make fun of other students who act, dress, or talk fancy. What do these students do?
> Student: It is their character... they use fancy words. Sometimes words that we don't even know the meaning of them (Fieldnotes 6/27/95).

Boys said that girls used "expensive language" much more frequently than they. Several boys reported that girls often saw words in their books and then said the word in class without knowing the meaning of it. When I asked one boy to give me an example, he said,

> Student: Commoditize, or something. And the boys too. When we come back to the dorm after evening study, we do this: Some use expensive words, and we will tease them.
> PD: And in class?
> Student: We are afraid to speak English in class (Fieldnotes 7/24/95).

Indeed, one day in the Ecom 10b agriculture class, a male student answered a teacher's question about pest control by saying, "You can use insecticide." Another boy on the other side repeated in a loud whisper, "Insecticide!" with a broad smile and looks around the room at his classmates (Fieldnotes 7/31/95). One grade nine girl said that she and her classmates spoke more English than the boys because they wanted to "try it." She said that boys did not speak much English at all.

For the students in the two schools, then, language use was a conspicuous marker of identity. Speaking English in the classroom, or using "expensive" English words outside of the classroom, was seen as acting "extra" and was criticized. Interestingly, there were sex-based differences in students' willingness to speak English, which will be taken up in more detail in a later section.

Styles of Dress and Consumption

Styles of dress on the two campus were another prominent marker of identity. Most commonly students on the campus dressed as casually as the school uniform would allow. They did not tuck in their shirts and often wore rubber sandals around campus. When not required to wear their uniforms, students often wore t-shirts with the sleeves cut off or ragged-looking shorts. Interview data indicated that students often associated styles of dress with patterns of consumption: Excessive (and public) expenditure of money for goods was seen as acting "extra" or "expensive."

> PD: What makes students say, "Hey, you're trying to be like a white man?"
> [TP: "Yu traim stap olsem masta"]

Student 1: [EHS Grade 10 Male] They used to say, cuz, especially girls, they used to act expensive... dressings, and makeups on their eyebrows and on their fingers, and... they don't want to work.
Student 2: [EHS Grade 10 Male] They want to speak expensive English... they want to act extra.
Student 1: They don't want to eat what is provided in the mess... they don't want to eat tinned fish and-
Student 2: They want to go to the store. Always go to the store and buy food from the store and buy food from the store and eat it.
PD: What kind?
Student 2: Biscuits, Twisties[3] (Student Interview 8/4/95).

Students said that their peers who wore high socks (in the Australian style), tucked in their shirts, wore belts, earrings, or used lipstick were trying to act like white people. Students also reported that wearing bluejeans, watches, and stockmans (heavy high-topped black leather Australian work boots) were all okay, but if these items were brand new, criticism could be expected.[4]

Many students found it hard to adjust to this climate of intense surveillance - particularly if they were from town. In the beginning of June, I asked the grade 7 girls below, both of whom had gone to community school in town, how the school year was going for them:

Student 1: Life is hard here.
PD: Why?
Student 1: People steal things and they gossip.
PD: About what?
Student 1: Oh, if you are wearing neat, new clothes, or shoes or something, they will say, "Oh, you rich," or "You think you're rich, or so good," or something.

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[3] A nationally marketed puffed corn snack with cheese flavoring.

[4] Students modified their stockmans somewhat by hammering steel screws into the sides of the heels to make them last longer.

> PD: Do they ever say something like, "Oh, you're trying to be like a white girl?"
> Student 2: Yes!
> Student 1: Yes! [simultaneously]. They say you're being like a white girl, in Pisin, in Pisin they say it (Fieldnotes 6/1/95).

This quotation illustrates both the difficulties students from town could endure and the fact that some of the norms of the valorized village-based identity extended throughout the grades of the schools.

Some students avoided criticism by trying to dress like "rascals" - the young urban criminals who were blamed for many social problems in PNG. I recorded the following event in my fieldnotes:

> After work parade several of these boys were wearing ripped, tough-looking t-shirts. James (a good student - CM 157) was wearing a nice, new-looking black polo shirt that looked like it had holes in it which had been cut with scissors. I pointed to his shirt, and asked him, "why?" He said, with a joking, mischievous look, "rascal" (Fieldnotes EHS 5/2/95).

Thus styles of dress and patterns of consumption (discussed further below) were other conspicuous markers of identity.

Work and Knowledge

Another more subtle area which was constructed in terms of Melanesian and white identity was the general domain of work. In Chapter 4 I quoted a Pere man who said that people in the village did not think white people could do hard, physical work. Students in the schools felt the same way. Moreover, as I explore below, these stereotypes seemed to be linked to their beliefs about appropriate domains of knowledge for Melanesians and whites.

Students' attitudes about physical work were most clearly visible during work parade:

> PD: Do students ever call you serious students things like, "You white man, or you master, or...?"
> Student 1: [Grade 10 EHS Male (CM167]) Like, if we don't work, yeah, if we don't want to go to work, work parade-
> Student 2: [Grade 10 EHS Male (CM 157)] Keep our fingers clean... white man.
> Student 1: Yeah, keeping ourselves clean. Basically, like a white man. We come to a road that is full of mud, and, you know, we don't want to, you know, be dirty - they call us, "You white man."
> Student 2: We want our body to be clean - they say, "You white man," say it like that (Fieldnotes 8/2/95).

Students' constructions regarding race and attitudes towards physical labor were generally similar to those made by many people in Pere village. These constructions seemed connected to the meanings students attributed to certain knowledge domains - particularly those of science and technology. Occasionally when topics of technology came up in conversation or in class, students would make statements which suggested that this knowledge "belonged" to white people (or in some cases, Japanese people). I recorded one such instance in my fieldnotes:

> [EHS 9b Science 7/20/95] After looking over the electricity experiment at the front of the room, I went back to my seat at the back of the class, and wondered out loud where the electricity came from [I'd seen a cord coming through the wall]. Lawrence, a (low-achieving) student sitting near me, raised his eyebrows at me and said, "save bilong white man" [white man's knowledge].

This quotation suggested that this knowledge "belonged" to white people and was associated with that identity. This theme came up in other more subtle ways, such as the time when I was conversing with a large group of eighth graders in the dormitory (I

usually spent time in the grade 10 dormitory), and one student asked urgently, "Those machines and things you make in America. How do you do it?"

In this section I have tried to show how this idealized student identity within their schools was constructed in the domains of language usage, style of dress and consumption, and habitual knowledge and work. Students made distinctions between the behaviors, practices, and knowledges that were appropriate for them and those that were appropriate for white people. Many of these issues affected the conduct of my study, as most of the students in the two schools had never had a social conversation with a white person before. They were curious about me, but shy. Moreover, many of them were concerned about what their peers and friends would say if they were seen talking with me. Because interracial communication was a novelty for some of these students, they were uncertain about how it ought to be conducted. One day on our way to his dormitory an eighth grade boy at EHS asked me,

> In America, do black people and white people walk together like this, or do they hate each other, or what? (Fieldnotes 5/2/95)

Religion

In this section I present evidence from the domain of religion that further exemplifies the egalitarian ethic implicit in the student cultures of the two high schools. I do not intend here to offer a detailed discussion of the role of religion in the lives of Manus youth, but rather to describe the aftermath of one religious event in the schools. For contextual information, though, as in Pere, there were varying degrees of religiosity and various faiths represented in the student bodies. The vast majority of students at

Ecom went to the Evangelical Lutheran church, while some others went to Catholic church. Manus High had a more diverse denominational representation. Students there went to Evangelical, Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, and Win Nasen churches.

The event I take up here was a unified Evangelical Christian Outreach conducted at the two high schools and the town market in early June, 1995. This outreach was carried out by approximately one dozen university students from the University of Technology ("Unitech") in Lae. After these students made presentations at both schools, they also made an appearance in the town market on a busy Saturday. They had a powerful public address system. They sang songs and made emotional overtures to the public to save themselves by accepting Jesus as their personal savior. One young man's oratory was especially potent:

> Many, many men and women, they are selling their lives to the devil very cheap! Don't you sell your life very cheap! Your papa can't save you! Your mama can't save you! Only Jesus can save you! Jesus is like a chicken on a plate! And you are very very hungry! It's easy to let Jesus into your life! (Fieldnotes 6/24/95).

One of the Unitech students told me afterwards that she was doing the outreach because, "I love these people, that is why I don't want them to go to hell. I want to help them."[5]

Though I was unable to attend the outreach sessions at the two high schools, I pieced together their content and aftermath through interviews with students and teachers who were there at the time. During the outreach, the Unitech evangelists described Hell

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[5] I should point out here that the notions of Hell here described by the evangelists resonated with the Manus "traditional" habitual way of thinking about religion, originating in the sanctions a man's Sir Ghost could take against him if he did not accede to his wishes.

in detail and told students that if they were not "ready" when Christ returned, then they would go there straight away. The Unitech evangelists urged students to change their ways, pray for themselves, and come forward and accept a personal blessing. One high-achieving Ecom ninth grade boy, who had had a history of discipline problems at the school, explained his reaction to the outreach:

> Student: I was really touched with their message... The second coming of Christ... Like I was really touched when they talk against - when they would describe Hell. Hell is like, burning Hell. Fire goes on and on, and no stop. So, we don't want to be in there. And sometimes, they challenge us, and they say, "I want to see you in Heaven. Would you like to see me too?" They said that. Or sometimes they'll say, "you don't know, Christ will come like a thief," that's true, too. You don't know. Maybe you are sleeping. Or maybe we are just talking, and he comes. You don't know, an hour, a minute, the day, or the month, the year. You must be ready, and just waiting for him. So, you know, when they say that, I was really touched. Because I'm a hard - core. I used to do things that were very negative to students and teachers.... Sometimes I try to avoid swearing. So, as for me, that is the main thing - swearing. Swearing and beating students. Act negative in classrooms. So, I'm praying to Christ to help me with this because I, as for me, I'm serious, I want to be changed. So I'm on the point of, you know, expel. Yeah, so I was really blessed, and now I'm in this. So I'm still praying hard to help my faith. In Christ. So I try to overcome persecutions.
> PD: So, when did you think you wanted to be changed?
> Student: Oh, just that night. Like something came in the air, and spoken to my ears. Really touched my mind. So I cried for my life, I know that I'm not ready if Christ comes. I'm not ready.... The students were crying very loudly for their lives (Student Interview 6/22/95).

Rodney's quotation speaks strongly to the difficulties and pain facing Manus youth in high school. He and other students reported that they felt enormous fear as they listened to the evangelists' descriptions of Hell and the possibility they could go end up there. In all 188 Ecom High School students went up to the front of the assembly area and received a personal blessing from the evangelists.

The Ecom Headmaster had high hopes that the outreach would have a positive effect on the discipline of the students and, implicitly, on their academic efforts:

> Two nights ago, it was a rare occasion. I'd like to see more spiritual development for the students. Physically, socially, they are okay. But their inner being has to be helped by something else. Maybe this is a message for the turning point of the school. I told the students that since the outreach I've seen more self control. Now, they see that mischievous acts do not have a place in their lives..... When we had a retreat of 20 students back in 1992, it resulted in a big change in the discipline situation in the school. We're now going to see how the school progresses with these 188 students. And the rest of the students are going to be watching them, and seeing what they are doing (Fieldnotes 6/22/95)

Indeed, soon after the outreach, Rodney and other students began to be criticized by their classmates. Rodney said that the evangelists had warned him about the comments of other students. They said that other students would come to him and say, "You cried, and went up to the front. You're a sick man," or "Hey, the church man is coming." Rodney and his classmates at both Ecom and Manus High were quickly labeled as "converts" within the respective student cultures, and their classmates kept a sharp eye on them to see if they were being hypocritical - if they behaved naughtily (TP: "wokim bikhet") in the school.

For example, many other students of various achievement levels reported that they either made fun of the "converts" or watched them closely around campus to see if they were behaving duplicitously. I once saw a grade 10 Ecom boy sneak around the church on campus about a month after the outreach while the "converts" were holding an afternoon devotion session.[6] He and his friends crouched just in view of the "converts"

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[6] These meetings usually consisted of group prayer, singing, and bible readings.

for several minutes, then ran back towards the campus. I saw this happen, and I asked him why he and his friends were doing that. He replied:

> I used to be one of them. But then the other students would say, "Hey, you were over there in the church during the devotion, being a convert, but then you come back, and do naughty things inside the classroom." So I was over there, just to, let them know that I was there - that I saw who was there, so when they do naughty things (TP: "bikhet"), I can say something to them (Fieldnotes 8/1/95).

Another student reiterated that the reason his classmates made fun of the converts was because they went to the devotion, but then when they came outside, they did all kinds of bad things. He said,

> But they think they're better because of the devotion. So plenty of times, the students call them "Skin Christians," or say "You're tricking God" (Fieldnotes 8/4/95).

Thus many students in the two high schools construed "conversion" as another way in which their classmates acted "extra." We will see in Chapter 8, however, that this kind of criticism may have been more prevalent among the grade 10 students than among the grade 9 students at Ecom - indeed mostly grade 9, 8, and 7 students received the blessing. Nevertheless, these criticisms were similar in kind to the others cited in this section regarding language usage, dress and consumption, and work: Students criticized these classmates for trying to distinguish themselves as better or superior to their peers - and thereby violating the egalitarian ethic of the corporate student culture.

The Secrets of High School Students in Their Villages

Some students faced similar issues of acting "extra" when they went home to their villages on holidays or weekends. I want to first emphasize that there was heterogeneity amongst Manus villages and the people in them with regard to their belief in the efficacy of education in 1995 and, therefore, their perceptions of students.[7] Some students said that their relatives and age-mates back in their villages respected them for being students. They said that relatives often called them into their houses to give them sago and fresh fish, because they knew that students' diets in the schools' messes consisted almost exclusively of tinned fish and rice.[8] These students also reported encouragement from relatives and age-mates to do well in school - so they could get work and buy things for them (cigarettes were often mentioned).

In general, when students were home, they did subsistence work and participated in the life of the village with their age-mates. Girls reported, though, that their relatives and friends criticized them there for speaking "expensive" language (such as Tok Pisin or English) or wearing "fancy" new clothes which they bought in town. One grade nine girl described the difficulty with language: "We come to school and we speak Pisin, and when we go home, our tongue is not used to language (tokples) anymore." Other students said that they were often criticized for not knowing how to do particular kinds of work in the village. These criticisms were usually accompanied by an admonishment

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[7] Indeed, when we visited Ponam, adults there told us that their children were their "gardens," in exactly the same words recorded by Carrier a decade earlier.

[8] Adult villagers said these imported foods were "white peoples' food." People would not become as strong eating these foods as they would eating a diet of sago and fish.

such as, "You go to high school, and what did your teachers teach you?" Some Pere high school students reported that adults in the village repeated the phrase "grade ten nating" to them and made statements which criticized them for acting "special" while they were in high school, when they knew the students would come back to the village once they finished there.

Students also said that when their friends and young relatives did ask them questions about high school, these were never about what they were learning but rather, were about the kinds of social experiences they were having there. In addition (as I show below), though most high school students had aspirations to get some kind of job in the cash sector -- most commonly being a pilot or air hostess --, they invariably hid these from their age-mates in their villages because they did not want to be perceived as acting or aspiring to be superior:

> PD: When you go to the village, do you usually talk with your friends there about your aim?
> Student 1: [MPHS Grade 10 Male (CM 137)] I usually just talk to my friends about what we usually do in the school. But about my aim? Working in the Fisheries Department? Only with my parents.
> PD: Why?
> Student 1: Oh, I don't know, really. I don't know why. Because, like, the boys, [in the village] they are interested in stories from, like, the outside, you know?
> PD: Stories about school?
> Student 1: Stories from school, and fights, and videos, stories from movies we have seen. We usually talk about those. But talk about our schoolwork? No. I don't know why. But with our parents, because they carried us, Yes.... Like me, my thought about this is, suppose you tell another boy [your aim], he will have some kind of thought, like, you are trying to show off, you know?
> PD: Show off?
> Student 1: Yeah, show off, show that you are better than him.

> Student 2: [MPHS Grade 10 Male (CM 92)] And if you don't get the job? He will come and he will spoil [TP: "bagarapim"] you.
> Student 1: Your cousins, yeah. They will spoil you if you don't succeed at the end of the year. They will say, you said you were going to work at Fisheries, didn't you? And now you come back to the village. How is that? So that is something, you know?
> PD: So it must be hard when you go back to the village.
> Student 1: No, it's all right. Like, we talk, about anything, but something that just, like belongs to you yourself [a secret], you can't say it, because later, it can spoil you (Student Interview 7/27/95).

High school students in Pere hid their aspirations also, and became greatly embarrassed when they were exposed in the village. One day I was conversing with Poniou Tanou, a grade 9 Ecom student, and four other young village men -- only one of whom had been to high school (up to grade 8) -- in our house in Pere. Unaware at the time of the embarrassment his response could cause him, I asked Poniou if he would like to build a house in the village in the future. He shrugged and I persisted. Then one of the young men, Paliau Pokiap, said with a smile, "He wants to be a pilot, jet pilot." Poniou immediately said, "Giamon" (TP: "nonsense"). Paliau said again, "Pilot," and Poniou immediately responded, "Nonsense." "Air Niugini," "Nonsense." Poniou's responses were uttered so quickly, it was almost as if he did not want the rest of us to hear the word "pilot." Though this exchange was conducted with smiles all around, Poniou's embarrassment was apparent even to me. These men later ribbed Poniou by saying that his favorite fish was one which broke rocks with its head (Fieldnotes 2/7/95).

I believe these experiences of high school students in their villages illuminate important aspects of the dilemmas which face them: Many of them had to balance their aspirations for a "modern" life with their claims to an egalitarian identity based in the

village. Therefore, these students do not want to be perceived as "showing off" in the village: They did not want to be criticized or ostracized for their conceit or their betrayal of the egalitarian aspect of the valorized "traditional" identity being constructed there. This identity had moral value for their own self-construction, as it was the basis for the village-based identity being valorized in the high schools.

Negative Peer Influence: The Difficulties in Being a Good Student in Manus

In this section I describe how norms regarding appropriate student behavior and not acting "extra" also applied to academic achievement. Accordingly, I discuss the experiences of higher-achieving students in the high schools: The ridicule they endured, the attempts of their classmates to depress their academic efforts, and the various adaptations they made to preserve their academic efforts. I attempt to show that these attempts to "pull down" other students were also grounded in the egalitarian ethic of the valorized village-based identity within the student culture. I then present data which delineates why so many students said it was "hard" to be a good student in their school and describe the teasing and subversion of the academic efforts of more serious students. Next I discuss statements from students which demonstrate that the motives behind this subversion were grounded in the egalitarian ethic of the student culture. These statements generally included references to "jealousy" and not wanting some students to be "better" than others.

Most importantly for the argument in this chapter, student questionnaire data revealed that 51% of males and 58% of females in the two schools felt that it was "hard"

to be a good student in their school. Of those who answered affirmatively to this question, 73% of males and 74% of females mentioned negative influence from friends as the primary reason for their difficulty. The following quotations on why it is "hard" to be a good student illustrate these difficulties:

> Because your friends will lead you into trouble and you will not enjoy your school work [Grade 7 Female].
>
> Because there are many students in my high school. Some of them are very bikhet. If I try to control myself, they will tease me. They will say that I'm a girl. So I'll follow them [Grade 7 Male].
>
> Because boys like to be bikhet, and if you are a good guy, they won't like to talk with you much [Grade 10 Male].
>
> Because older students don't want us to study and get good marks. That's the important thing with them [Grade 9 Male].

In the section below I examine the character of this influence, especially the jealousy inherent in it. I want to stress here, however, that there were all kinds of students in the two schools. As Pomat, a grade 10 boy at MPHS pointed out to me,

> They are not one kind, you know? They have different minds, different brains, different thinking. So there are some who are good, and some who are no good. Some tease. They tease people. Some do good things for you, like help you. All people aren't the same. Do you understand the difference? (Student Interview 7/27/95).

Thus while some students criticized the efforts of their classmates, others supported them. My purpose here is to describe this negative influence within the student culture.

The Pain of Ridicule

In interviews high-achieving students elaborated on the kinds of ridicule they endured from their classmates and the ways in which their classmates tried to subvert their academic efforts. These students, both male and female, reported that their peers regularly teased them and called them names, such as "studying man" (TP: man bilong studi); "dux" (which referred to the best student in a given subject); "brainbox;" "I.Q.;" and "mental case." As suggested in the quote in Chapter 6, students also made comments to their higher-achieving peers which questioned the utility of studying with such a limited opportunity structure after grade 10. For example, they frequently said, "You study and study, and where will you go?." Students also said of their high-achieving peers that they were "breaking their heads studying." One high-achieving grade 9 student at Ecom (CM 178) said,

> Yeah, sometimes, they'll say, "Hey, please, try to take it easy on the studying." Everywhere the serious student goes, everywhere he carries his study book, every night, he won't sleep, he won't sleep, he won't study until late. So when we come and do the test, after the test, we students discuss questions, and then the students say, "Hey, man, your answer is wrong." And the students will tell him, "You studied, didn't you? You studied and studied all through the night, huh?" Or sometimes they say, "Look at him, he really broke his head studying" (Student Interview 6/22/95).

High-achieving students also reported that their classmates sometimes did things to interfere with their studying. They said their classmates hid their books before a test so they could not study (they said when this happened, they tried to borrow a friend's book); or disturbed them when they were trying to study by playing tapes in the dorm, throwing small stones or betelnut at them. When I asked one high-achieving grade 10 boy (CM

167) at Ecom if students did things to their classmates who were very serious about their studies, he said,

> While he is busy, students try to poke him, or distract him from what he is doing. They disturb him. Or, they used to say, when he is working, "man bilong studi"... making fun of him. They used to, what, trick them, give them an excuse to them, like, oh, "let's go for a walk" (Student Interview 6/1/95).

As this quotation indicates, these high-achieving students also reported that sometimes their lower-achieving friends would "trick" them into leaving study hall, or cutting a class. This practice was similar to that reported by the former Chairman of the Board of Management in Pere Village. These high school students described these practices as their friends giving them an "excuse" to leave their studies, for example, suggesting that they go for a walk or go smoke. This "tricking" seemed to be evidence of the complex interrelationship of competition and cooperation in these new in-school friendships. Higher achieving students often trusted that their friends would have their mutual best interests at stake, usually acceded to these excuses, and willingly left their studies. Many of them expressed bewilderment at the idea that their friends might want to pull them down. Thus many students were torn when their friends urged them to leave their studies or class: they wanted to honor the cooperative camaraderie which was an important part of the friendship's (and high school's) appeal, but were only semi-conscious of their friend's hidden motive - pulling them down to a more egalitarian plane. This "tricking" and depression of achievement thus describes some of the work which these temporary in-school friendships carried out.

Aspirations, Jealousy, and Poison: "They Are Trying to Study to Be That Person"

This teasing and "pulling down" of classmates, motivated by the egalitarian ethic within the student culture, extended to aspirations: High achieving students reported that they thought their classmates (especially older peers) pulled them down because they did not want them to be "above" or "better than" them, either in school or afterwards. As I mentioned earlier, many students had aspirations of jobs in the cash sector. These aspirations were generally unrelated to achievement levels and could even co-exist with the valorized village-based identity described above. These aspirations were, therefore, reflective of the array of students' contrasting and sometimes contradictory desires.

Students wanted to have experiences in the outside world, such as traveling to different countries and "seeing" certain things there with their "own eyes" (see Fishman 1976). Students especially aspired to exciting modern jobs which involved travel (and often modern technology), such as being an air hostess for girls[9] and a pilot for boys. Indeed most student aspirations involved airplanes. Many grade 10 girls wrote letters to Air Niugini expressing interest in their training program. One wrote that she wanted to work for Air Niugini so she could "fly around and see different places." Girls had other reasons for wanting to be an air hostess as well: During one MPHS 10p English class, the teacher asked students what kind of work they would like to do after high school if they could have their wish. There was a long silence, and the teacher repeatedly encouraged students to answer. Finally, a girl at the front of the class mumbled, "Air hostess," which

[9] On one of my in-class questionnaires a Manus High grade 10 girl wrote that she wanted to be an "air hostage." This illustrates the distance for some of these students between their aspirations and their achievement level in school.

was greeted with hoots of wild laughter (which I will address below). The teacher said, "Okay, she wants to be an air hostess. Why?" There was more silence then, after several moments, the girl mumbled, barely audibly, "The dress." There were more hoots of laughter, and the teacher said, "Okay, she wants to be an air hostess because of the way they dress" (MPHS 10p English 7/26/95).

Most boys aspired to jobs as pilots, flight engineers, airplane mechanics, ships engineers, or outboard motor mechanics. Interestingly, as Martin, a high-achieving Manus grade 10 boy explained, these aspirations were motivated in part by an egalitarian sentiment also:

> PD: What do you want to do when you are finished with school?
> Student: [MPHS Grade 10 Male (CM 160)] Being an aircraft engineer, or a pilot, or something like that. I like [though he had not been] going overseas, seeing other countries.
> PD: Why?
> Student: When other people go out to other countries, when they come back, they tell stories. There is something building up in me, say, "Ahh... they are thinking, they are superior than me." So I think, I could be one of them if I work hard in my education; so I could go out and also like that. I just... my hope too, is just to see other countries, at least some... Like, I think Australia is my first one. I want to go down there and see the State of Origin [a popular Australian rugby tournament] with my own eyes (Student Interview 6/2/95).

Another grade 10 boy at Ecom said he wanted to go to Hollywood to see Jean-Claude Van Damme "with my own eyes." Other students said they wanted to have a ride on an airplane. These students had a thirst for experiences in the modern world, which was motivated in part by a desire to level the status between themselves and others who had already had these experiences.

However, in the egalitarian atmosphere of the student culture in which many students were implicitly preparing themselves for lives back in their natal villages, it was inappropriate for students to openly express these aspirations or to demonstrate substantial effort in trying to realize them. To do so invited jealousy. Martin, the grade 10 MPHS student quoted above, explained:

> Like if somebody is jealous of the other person, and he spends, or she spends most of the time doing studying, and when the other person is jealous, he'll just go and talk to the other boys like this: "I see that fellow all the time, and he goes to study, and he thinks he's going to get a job or what." Some expressions like that (Student Interview 6/2/95).

The situation was similar for girls as well. The following segment of a group interview of five Ecom grade 9 girls all from the same village illustrates the pain high-achieving students endured from their peers:

> PD: What do students say to students who spend all their time studying?
> Student 1: Yeah, they'll tease.
> Student 2: Yeah, tease.
> Student 1: Or they'll say, "You are dux, dux bilong studies." Or they'll say, "We know that you are dux, why do you want to study?" And they'll say, "That's good, you study, air hostess." And they'll tease you, air hostess, and pilot."
> Student 3: [By far the best student in the group (CM181); who had earlier confided in the interview that she wanted to be a doctor] Doctor, and...
> PD: They'll tease you?
> All: Yeah.
> Student 1: They know that what you are studying for is to become that particular person.
> PD: So what do those students say in return?
> Student 3: Sometimes we just feel ashamed.

This quotation from the third student, the number one student in her grade, illustrates the emotional difficulties that high-achieving students often endured in the high schools:

The fact that she could feel "ashamed" for being a good student and having aspirations to

be a doctor. Indeed, as they did in their natal villages, most students hid their deepest held (TP: "tru tru") aspirations from their friends and only shared them with their closest blood relatives (TP: "wantok blut") - usually between 2-4 classmates.[10] The fact that students' criticisms of their higher-achieving peers was based in the egalitarian ethic of the student culture was further illustrated by the fact that students who refused to share their homework with classmates were called "greedy."

Teachers also observed that peer group pressure was very strong in the two high schools. One veteran teacher at MPHS said, "It's hard to be a serious student here." In a similar vein, an expatriate missionary teacher said,

> It's awfully hard to go it alone here. To be one of the students who, when other students are messing around in class, or disrupting class, says something, or shushes them, or tells them to stop. These classes and schools are small, and its not like if you want to be serious and study, you can just get lost in the crowd. You are with this class all the way through, and people get to know you, and it's very hard to be an individual. It's very hard to stick out (Fieldnotes 5/18/95).

In this section I have tried to show that high-achieving students, and students with overt aspirations to obtain prestigious jobs in the cash economy, were liable to be teased, criticized, and have their academic efforts subverted by their classmates. As the quotes on the Manus Student Questionnaire indicated, they also risked not having as many friends - one of the in-school experiences that students valued most. These criticisms were grounded in the egalitarian ethic of the student culture. As one above-average

[10] In some group interviews with wantoks from the same village, students openly shared their aspirations for the first time with blood relatives whom they had known their entire lives.

grade 10 student at Ecom said, when asked if it was hard to be a serious student at his school,

> Yes, it's hard... Some of us, they don't take it serious, so its poison all of us (Student Interview 8/1/95).

Preserving Achievement and Aspirations: High-Achieving Students' Adaptations to the Anti-Academic School Climate

However, some students in the high schools were able to succeed in school and, to varying degrees, retain some of their in-school friendships. These students adopted practices which included studying in secret or with small, academically-oriented peer groups, witholding marks from friends, and sharing homework.

Many high-achieving students (male and female) at both schools said that they did a great deal of their homework late at night in their dormitories by the light of a candle - especially if they had a test the next day. These students said they found it difficult to study in their evening study halls because of all the noise from their classmates' conversations. Some of these students said that if they had a test the next day, they would sleep for two or three hours, then get up and study until dawn.

These students did not usually show their marks to their friends because they said they would be teased. One high-achieving grade 10 boy at Manus High said that even though his closest friends were from his village, he never talked to them about his academics. Also he told none of them that, after grade nine, he had scored at the top of his class on the year-end exams:

> Student: This is the way I have done it in the past, so this is the way I will continue to do it. I keep everything a secret.

> PD: Will they say things to you if they find out?
> Student: Yes. Many students are here because of the girls. To find girlfriends, and tell stories with their girlfriends. They don't really care about their classes (Fieldnotes 6/26/95).

There were also a few small academically-oriented groups of friends and wantoks who studied together at the two schools. They often went to a relatives' house away from campus to study on a weekend and in school had "races" during tests to see who could get the highest score.[11] At Manus High a group of five of the best grade 10 students wrote letters together to apply for scholarships to National High Schools.

Other students, especially girls, got considerable support in their academic efforts from relatives back in their villages. This support often came in the way of letters which were sent back and forth between the school and the villages or supportive messages written in each other's "auto" (autograph book). These letters (sometimes addressed to "MPHSlave") encouraged students to "be good, and don't go around," to "aim for what you are aiming form," and to watch out for boys with "hungry eyes."

Some high-achieving students cultivated a "naughty" image for their peers while maintaining their academic efforts. Two such boys at Ecom, Arthur (CM141) and Kela (CM160), described their miniature gang, the "Three Five Rebels." When we spoke they were dressed as pseudo-"rascals:" Kela had on a headband and Arthur had his shirt knotted up over his shoulders, with a cloth wrapped turban-style around his head.

> Arthur: In 10b, we are the 10b rebels. The Three Five Rebels. We like the figure 35 - three five. So we usually go around and do things together,

[11] While Manus students sometimes had races for a few slices of bread from each others' lunch, Ecom students said they couldn't do this because they lived too far away from town, and would not be able to find any other food to eat.

> like sometimes take a "day off" from school. Or, if we get caught breaking a school rule, one of us will go in front of the teachers and take the punishment, and not tell on the other ones, then go back up to the dorm, and plan something again. Like stealing things from the girls' dorm, or sneaking around on top of the classroom roof, or ambushing the Uru - the gang of boys from 10a, by shooting stones at them in the bush. Or inform on other boys stealing things while WE are really stealing things ourselves (Fieldnotes 8/1/95).

I argue that these boys were cultivating an "anti-school" image to have fun and more importantly, to impress their peers. While these boys occasionally took a "day off" from school, these occasions were rare, and they were, for the most part, consistent in their academic efforts.

Other students defended their academic efforts physically. Kakesh was a strong ninth grade boy from the island of Rambuyto who had been at Ecom for his seventh grade year. He said he used to be a very bad boy (TP: "bikhet manki stret") and that once he got in a huge fight with 11 other boys, all of whose faces he bloodied. Ecom suspended him for two weeks, and then his uncle, a teacher at MPHS, had him transferred to Manus High. Since then, Kakesh said he tried to "hide" his "bikhet." He did this because he was afraid if the teachers saw him do bad things, then they would write this in their report, and he would not receive his offer.[12] When I asked him if learning was hard at Manus High, he responded,

> Learning is easy if you concentrate. You must concentrate on your studies, and then you will come up good (Fieldnotes 7/25).

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[12] In addition to students' performance on the Grade 10 SCE, teachers' evaluations were also used in selection of students for tertiary education.

He said, though, that some of his wantoks from Rambuyto and some of his classmates in the school gossiped about him. They said he studied too much or he spoke a lot of fancy English. Kakesh said that when he heard about these things, he usually went and beat up those students. At the end of the interview, however, he said that he had to hide his academic efforts and that it was hard to be a good student sometimes.

As Ndritakou said in an earlier quotation, there were all kinds of students in the two high schools. In this section I have sketched how some of them negotiated the pressures their peers deployed against academic achievement in the schools.

## "It's Hard to Be a Good Boy:" The Dilemmas of Manus Youth

Many students, however, did not deal with these pressures as well and both, consciously and unconsciously, adopted practices which were detrimental to their academic success and constrained their possible futures. These students found it very difficult to do well in school while maintaining the friendships and peer relationships which were important to them. Many of these students succumbed to the pressures of friends and peers to curtail their academic efforts and took up some of the practices characteristic of the anti-academic student culture, such as resisting their teachers in class, skipping classes, and smoking marijuana. In this section I present brief summaries of the experiences of three students in the two high schools to illustrate these dilemmas.

Tim. Tim (CM 157) was a grade 10 boy at Ecom whose father was an evangelical pastor in a village outside of Lorengau. The family was originally from an

island near Madang, but had moved to the province two years earlier. Tim had been one of the three best students in his grade during his eighth grade year. He worked very hard. However, in the middle of his tenth grade year, his study habits and classroom behavior began to change. His expatriate science teacher explained,

> But this year something is happening. More and more students in that class are coming late to class, and I remember, a couple of weeks ago, he was late, and then he straggled in with some other boys, and they'd be smoking on the other side of the soccer field. And in class now, instead of giving straight answers to questions, he tells jokes in front of his classmates. And his grades have gone right down, but his popularity has gone up. He's one of the most popular kids in that class now. I think somewhere along the line, he decided, "this isn't worth it, I'd rather have fun and be a popular kid." So that's what he's doing (Fieldnotes 5/18/95).

Indeed, as the 1995 academic year progressed, Tim' attendance continued to be inconsistent and his classroom behavior inappropriate. Tim himself said that he was "tired of school" and wanted to "enjoy himself" for the rest of the year. He shyly admitted that he did things like coming in late to class and clowning around in his classes to make him more popular with his classmates. But he was clearly struggling with how to maintain appropriate behavior for the rest of the year. His father had come out to school to talk with him and the headmaster twice, and Tim knew he was trying the patience of both of them. However, in the months leading up to the grade 10 exam, he continued his erratic behaviors.

Pomat. Another boy who tried to preserve his academic efforts and his relationships with friends, while struggling with a developing addiction to marijuana, was Pomat, a Manus High grade 10 student from the small island of Mouk off the

southeastern coast of Manus. Pomat's family was relatively well off - his older brother and sister both worked outside the province, and his parents lived in a permanent house and had two fiberglass boats and two outboard motors. Pomat said his parents did not need him to obtain cash employment. He knew he could go back and work in the village after high school and said that he could do virtually all of the mens' work there - he had even gone on long-distance tuna fishing expeditions with the adult men from the village. However, Pomat aspired to work for the Provincial Fisheries Department as a Fisheries Inspector.[13]

In his first two years in high school, Pomat had been a diligent student. He studied hard and stayed away from boys whom he knew smoked and caused trouble. Moreover, he and two of his blood relatives used to go up to Cancer Hill (named such because it was a popular destination for smoking) and pray, "because we think our Father will help us in our school, something like that." However, Pomat began to smoke marijuana in eighth grade and said that he began to forget about religion. He said that now he was addicted. Pomat said that even though he knew that smoking made him forget things he learned in class, he still could not keep himself from doing it.

> Smoking is good, but, one thing, one bad thing about it is, I'm talking about myself, is if I was doing my studies, homework, and, when I saw someone smoking, I would just leave my homework, whatever I'm doing, and go and smoke. I don't even mind, or think, about my studies. I don't think about that when I see smoke. Ay, (he shrugged, and grimaced) it's very hard... very hard to control it (Student Interview 7/27/95).

[13] This job involved patrolling Papua New Guinean waters around Manus to make sure that foreign fishing vessels were not fishing inside PNG's sovereign waters - a frequent occurrence.

Pomat said that some of his classmates with whom he smoked were concerned about school (TP: "bisi long skul"), but that when they smoked, they told each other to just "forget about it."

> When we take drugs and alcohol, your brain becomes... crazy, you know? You don't know what to do. Want to find something to enjoy yourself. You don't want to study. You just want to listen to music. It will make you feel happy... yeah... Something like that (Student Interview 7/27/95).

Pomat had recently been caught with a small amount of marijuana on campus (an offense which usually led to expulsion), but the deputy headmaster had suspended him for two weeks and given him a second chance. However, though he said he wanted to stop smoking, he could not.

In 1995, Pomat looked like many of his more popular classmates - he frequently wore cutoff shorts, never tucked his shirt in, and had a well-worn pair of stockman boots. He also wore a high-tech digital Casio watch which his sister had given him. Meanwhile, he tried to continue to do well in school and was a fairly dedicated student. Perhaps because of his working relatives, Pomat spoke better English than most of his classmates and kept up with his homework assignments. He took measures, however, to preserve his relationships with his lower-achieving classmates. He always shared his notebooks or homework with them. He proudly said, "Anybody can borrow my notebook." He contrasted his willingness to do so with his classmate Kisokau, whom he called "greedy" for not sharing his notebook. He also shared his aspirations of working in the Fisheries Department only with three of his blood relatives from his village on Mouk. In class he

rarely volunteered answers except, importantly, at times when attendance was low (such as in afternoon English classes) and many of his male friends were absent.

Pomat's story points out many of the dilemmas presented in this report. He tried to be a good student in his first two years of high school. However, he began to smoke marijuana and now could not stop, even though he knew his smoking was putting his academic success at risk. He said if he saw some friends smoking he would leave his studies without a second thought. However, in spite of these limitations, Pomat was still trying to do well in school - he kept up on his homework and, when his friends were not around, participated in class. He also consciously took measures to preserve his relationships with friends and classmates by sharing his homework and hiding his aspirations. Pomat's case is important because it illustrates the potential of Manus students to construct syncretic identities in school - identities which include apparently disparate elements. Although he was not completely successful, Pomat found ways to preserve relationships with friends and peers and to maintain effort in his classes. I will return to the notion of syncretic identities in the conclusion.

Thomas. The last case I present here is that of Thomas - the second-youngest son of Nyalawen of Pere Village, who was described in Chapter 4. Thomas was the fourth of Talawon's five children to attend high school in Manus. Two of his older sisters had gone on to National High School and his next oldest was in grade 10 at MPHS. Thomas himself was in grade 8 at MPHS. During the 1995 school year Thomas was in the top 5% of his class. However, as I came to know him at the school, he was frequently alone

and seemed, to my foreign eye, to be unhappy. I interviewed him and a relative of his whose mother was from Pere, but now lived in town. In hushed tones, Thomas talked about his difficulties in school:

> Thomas: Because here, at Manus High School, its hard to be, like, a good boy. You can try to be a good boy, but, where you are in the middle of other boys, and they are doing things, you'll forget about your good ways, and just follow them.
> PD: Like what?
> Thomas: Like, they'll swear, things like that, you know? Swear, and some boys, they smoke. You come, you see other boys smoking, and they say, "try smoking" (Student Interview 7/28/95).

Later, Thomas disclosed that he had begun to smoke marijuana himself. This quotation illustrates the dilemmas Thomas faced as a high school student, particularly the multiple valences of "good" which were pulling at him. He had many people to please: His mother, an aunt who might have blessing/cursing power over him (originating in the Tandritanitani cult mentioned in Chapter 4), the Margaret Mead Scholarship Committee, and his teachers - all of whom valued academic achievement and the opportunities it could bring. They expected Thomas to try his best in school.

More immediately, however, Thomas felt pressure to please his peers and friends in school. These peers and friends had different ideas about what "goods" were worth pursuing in life (Taylor 1989). These "goods" were determined by their own subjective perceptions of the opportunity structure after high school and the corresponding ways in which they were resolving their identity dilemmas. For many of Thomas's classmates, it was "good" to enjoy the social experiences and new friendships which high school offered, to have a "casual" attitude about their studies. While they entertained somewhat

distant aspirations to have an exciting "modern" job such as a pilot, they imagined going back to their natal villages together after high school was finished.

## Conclusion

As an attempt to maintain worth in response to their own perceived life chances, the classmates of Thomas, Pomat, and Tim valorized an egalitarian village-based identity within the student culture of the two high schools. This identity and egalitarian ethos were linked to the valorized "traditionality" being constructed in Pere and other Manus villages. As in the village, where it was not "good" to have to pay money for a lot of imported goods and where villagers celebrated their own subsistence abilities and to provide for themselves, in the schools it was not "good" to act "extra" or "expensive" by appropriating behaviors which were associated with having a wage-earning position in the cash economy. Many students DID have secret aspirations of having such work (especially exciting "modern" jobs like being air hostesses and pilots). However, students were also aware of the limited opportunity structure after grade 10 and their corresponding life chances. They thus criticized their classmates who appropriated these behaviors and made open efforts to realize their ambitions, because they were jealous of their possible success and were afraid of being left behind. Thus, a critical mass of students lay claim to a moral "good" inherent in "traditional" Melanesian egalitarianism and an identity grounded in their villages. They exerted this claim as leverage over their peers in an effort to restrain their individualistic ambitions. Students reasoned that at some point, their successful classmates would ultimately have to come back to the

village and have to contend with the values of the people living there. The following quotation from Frisu, the new Headmaster of Pere Community School, illustrates this point. At the end of my data collection, I shared the report on my preliminary findings with Frisu which I had just presented to the Provincial Government. Frisu concurred with the content of the report and elaborated on the importance of the village as a moral reference point for students in school:

> Now, the other expression I always find - the common one - is, if, let's say, a friend is driving out in a car, let's say, if he's from here [Pere], and he's driving a car, in town - a government car. And they are standing on the road, and he doesn't come and stop. And help them. Give them a ride to town. They say, "It's all right. You drive the car and go to the government. And when you come to the village, will you come back to the village with your car?" Which means, "You are going to come and you are going to suffer with me like this. See, you must remember that. You are going to come and suffer with me. So, when I am suffering, you remember, you are going to help me. So when you come, I am going to help you too." So, one that I especially find here, is village. The village is there. You go and do your work. You can study, go to the university, go to some kind of university, you finish it, and go somewhere. One day, you're going to end up in the village. So... the village is there (Fieldnotes 8/29/95).

This quotation shows how villagers could assert their own habitual social orientation of sharing and egalitarianism to assert some degree of control over those in towns. I argue here that this is the same kind of orientation which underlay the egalitarian ethic within the student cultures of the two schools and restrained the academic achievement and aspirations of many students there.

# CHAPTER 8

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this dissertation I have tried to describe the creative responses of the people of a Papua New Guinean province to processes which were marginalizing them within the world system. Both people in Pere Village and students in Manus high schools felt in danger of being left behind by processes of modernization. I have focused on how, in their ongoing processes of self-definition, high school students' responses to this situation were both critical and creative. Their claim to a moral "good" inherent in Melanesian egalitarianism both critiqued the tendency of capitalist development to create hierarchical status differences and served to maintain their sense of worth in a context of increasing powerlessness.

I located the study in pertinent aspects of the cultural history of Manus. In particular I discussed how the gradual erosion of competitive exchange, and collapse of the hierarchy it perpetuated fostered a climate in which the power to determine status differences had shifted out of the village to migrant wage earners. People relied on subsistence economics primarily to feed their families rather than to accrue a surplus or gain credit or prestige through exchange. Meanwhile the paucity of wage-earning opportunities in the cash economy had leveled aspirations for personal wealth and led to a revaluation of tradition as a further development of the objectification of indigenous culture.

I also described the Manus' habitual way of thinking about education - in terms of efficacy of knowledge. At the national level, I located the study in a current dialogue in Papua New Guinea regarding the role of education in the perpetuation of inequality: I focused on efforts to expand secondary and post-secondary education through UNESCO, Unicef, and World Bank - supported Education for All initiatives, intended to bring more students through to grade ten and to expand tertiary education. I discussed how Manus Province had implemented such a program in 1989, but had seen a precipitous drop in its achievement on the Grade 10 SCE since that time. Thus the study was motivated in part by a request from the Assistant Secretary of Education in Manus for research into factors which could explain this decline. The findings presented here suggest that this decline may be related to Manus young peoples' creative responses to preserve their worth in the face of structural forces which threatened to marginalize them.

The research was designed as a multi-site case study in order to understand linkages between Manus villages and high schools. In 1995, many Manus adults and students responded to the increasingly limited opportunity structure after grade 10 in their habitual manner of thinking about education in terms of efficacy of knowledge. They became discouraged about the prospects for a return on their educational investment and minimalized their involvement in educational processes, while they made claims to a somewhat "invented" traditionality in their villages. In Pere, this discouragement was evident in parents' detached attitudes towards their childrens' schooling and in their lack of support for the daily operation of Pere Community School.

In Manus and Ecom High Schools, many students regarded a grade 10 education in the context of the current educational opportunity structure as "worthless." In the absence of strong support from parents and in the face of eroding pedagogical authority due to the erosion of employment opportunities and the nationalization of the teaching staff, a critical mass of students rationalized that they would not score well enough on the Grade 10 SCE to get an offer to tertiary education. These students knew that they could go home to their villages where life was "easy:" They could make their living from subsistence economics and still experience imported entertainments and goods from town. Moreover, they hoped to use some of their school-knowledge to do something "practical" in their villages, like running a trade store or building semi-permanent houses. A possible model for these students, Paliau Pokiap, was described in Chapter 6. These students adopted a self-described "casual" attitude towards their studies and curtailed their academic efforts. They were frequently absent from class, failed to complete their homework, and rarely participated in classroom discussions. In addition, students resisted teachers, in both subtle and violent ways. Generally, these students privileged the pursuit of social experience over school success. I argued that this was a rational response given these students' perceived life-chances and that, moreover, this development signalled a shift in the meaning of high school experience for young Manus - it was becoming valued as much for the unique social experience it offered as for its occupational and educational utility.

Most importantly, a critical mass of students lay claim to a moral "good" inherent in "traditional" Melanesian egalitarianism and an identity grounded in their villages.

They exerted this claim as leverage over their peers in an effort to restrain their individualistic ambitions and build a community of like-others. Indeed, in its counter-school stance, this valorized identity contained an implicit critique of a central meaning of school success: Hierarchical social relations for Papua New Guineans. Thus, in Chapter 7, I showed that the ongoing production of this valorized egalitarian identity and anti-academic culture entailed the constant surveillance of peers for signs of the "other." Behaviors which were construed as social capital (and often conflated with constructions of white identity), including excessive academic effort, were labeled as efforts to act "extra." Students who elicited these behaviors were teased, criticized, or ostracized. I acknowledged that many students did have secret aspirations of having a "modern" job in the cash economy. However, most of them were aware of the limited opportunity structure after grade 10 and their corresponding life chances. They criticized their classmates who appropriated "modern" or "Western" behaviors and made overt efforts to realize their ambitions, because they were jealous of their possible success and were afraid of being left behind.

The effect was the creation of an anti-academic climate in the two schools in which high-achieving students felt "ashamed" of their academic efforts and aspirations of attaining jobs in the cash economy. I showed that some high-achieving students adopted practices and formed syncretic identities which enabled them to preserve their academic efforts, aspirations, and, to some degree, their valuable in-school friendships. However, many others fell prey to the pressures of the student culture, curtailed their academic efforts, resisted teachers, and initiated drug use. In this sense, I argued that high schools

in Manus must be seen as social fields in which students' academic engagement and possible selves are negotiated.

## Relevance of the Findings for the Cultural History of Pere

One of the most striking differences between the social processes found in Pere in 1995 and those of some other recent ethnographies of social change processes in PNG (Kulick 1992; Fife 1995b; Sykes 1995) was the paucity of mimesis found there. Indeed rather than expending great effort in trying to attain or copy "modern" lifestyles, people in Pere were revaluing (and reinventing) elements of their own "traditional" culture. In Chapter 4, I argued that they were doing this partially to maintain worth in a context where important economic resources had shifted away from them and to keep some degree of control over people living in towns. Here, I want to expand on this argument, using insights from Gewertz and Errington, and Schwartz.

In *Twisted histories, altered contexts*, Gewertz and Errington suggested that the Chambris'[1] relationship with the world system was problematic because their own society was based on a system of mutual interdepependence characterized by commensurate differences, while the world capitalist system was based on hierarchical interdependence characterized by incommensurate differences. Gewertz and Errington argued that,

> The regional system of commensurate differences had become increasingly and undeniably encompassed in a world system of incommensurate differences and the linkages between regional and world systems had developed to such an extent that the world system has had power to change the regional system (1991:208).

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[1] A group who live in the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea.

In Chapters 2 and 4 I presented descriptions of Manus which showed that it, like the Chambri society described by Gewertz and Errington, was an interdependent system characterized by commensurate differences, which was linked to the world system. I also argued in Chapter 2, that though colonial institutions such as churches and schools were initially forced on them, the Manus seized the opportunities they presented in the hope - motivated by their ideology of commensurate differences and efficacy of knowledge habitus - that their doing so would elevate their standard of living to that of Europeans. However, historically, the Manus have gone through periods of discouragement about the prospects for attaining this lifestyle - the waning of the Paliau movement was the most recent period. I argue here that in 1995 the Manus were going through another period of discouragement regarding the prospects for attaining equality with Westerners: They perceived an inhospitable job market and faced difficulties in getting money. All the while they continued to consume Western imported goods and media, largely through remittances from relatives.

Schwartz argued that because of their early exposure to mission schooling and high percentage of school leavers who attained employment from the 60s through the 80s, that in terms of acculturation, Manus was 20 years ahead of most of the rest of Papua New Guinea (personal communication). I believe that the developments in Pere in 1995 are evidence of villagers' collective perception of the constraints imposed on their lives by the world system of incommensurate differences and of their marginalized place within it. In this view, Pwendrilei's statement that the "Road of the school is blocked" must be extended beyond school to the education-employment-remittances cycle and to

the Manus' historically-held notion that education could ultimately lead to equality with whites. In 1995, Pere villagers were beginning to realize that, within the constraints of the world system, this would not be readily possible. This enlightenment would account for the paucity of mimesis in the village compared to the settings researched by Kulick, Sykes, and Fife. In this light, Pere Villagers' valorization of "traditional" identity and subsistence technology was a rational response to preserve worth in this context.

## Equity Issues and the Future of Education for All

However, a central problem for Pere Villagers in 1995 was that they did need some money to supplement their subsistence activities. Therefore, a curtailment in their involvement with education could lead to a decrease in their future numbers of remitters. While I heard no concerns about this issue in Pere, I did hear them expressed by a man from Wuvulu - the islands which lay in the far western part of the province. He said,

> There are many high school students from Wuvulu who are dropping out and coming back to the village after 7th or 8th grade. People are worried because it [Wuvulu] is only two small islands, and they don't have another way of earning income. In 10 years it could get serious, because they need some young people to finish school and go out and get jobs, so they can help their relatives in the village (Fieldnotes 2/10/95).

Thus the ambivalent attitudes of Pere Villagers towards education and the "casual" attitudes of Manus high school students towards their studies (including the responses of the Wuvulu students mentioned above) bear on the role of education in addressing issues of equity in Papua New Guinea discussed in Chapter 3.

As I mentioned in that chapter, the Education for All initiative, adopted in Manus in 1991, was intended to address equity issues by bringing a larger number of students through to grade 10 (implicit in the plan was an optimism that opportunities for post-secondary education would expand). And in 1997, Manus opened its own "top-up" national high school, at Papitalai, consisting of two classes each of grades 11 and 12. However, given the Province's recent poor performance on the Grade 10 SCE, it was unclear whether the high schools in the province would produce enough students qualified to matriculate into grade 11 or, once there, whether they would ultimately be able to compete effectively on the national grade 12 exam. Thus, we must return to the problem of "poor academic quality" within the high schools alluded to by the Manus Assistant Secretary of Education in Chapter 3.

Several teachers, administrators, and students interviewed in this study attributed the poor academic quality in the schools to the Education for All policy and the elimination of the grade 8 examination (called the "block-up" system). The night watchman at Manus High School, who had worked there for ten years and had a keen eye for school life, put it succinctly,

> Now, with the block-up system it is bad. Before, the grade eight exam would separate the naughty [TP: "bikhet"] students, and only the bright students would go through. But now, all the students are going through. They are letting everybody go through. And so the bikhets that go through, they behave badly [TP: "hambak"], and they make other students hambak, and so the standards go down (Fieldnotes 5/9/95).

Several grade 10 students and a school administrator said explicitly that the grade 8 exam should be brought back. Indeed, the larger number of students of varied abilities in the

upper grades of the high schools was likely a major contributor to the anti-academic student culture which developed and constrained the efforts of other students.

However, given Papua New Guinea's relationship with the World Bank and the United Nations, there is pressure to continue to address equity issues and maintain reforms like Education for All. The research findings presented in this dissertation suggest that, in order to improve the academic quality in Manus classrooms and thereby achieve some of the goals of Education for All, educators must attend more closely to the meanings which students make of their schooling experiences.

Attending to Students' Inner Worlds

I argue in this section that in order to improve academic quality, schools must acknowledge students' subjective abilities to make meanings which affect their academic engagement and which shape their ongoing self-construction. This is not to say that Manus schools should abandon school rules and disciplinary policies. To the contrary, the data in this study indicated that the laxity in the enforcement of school rules contributed to the anti-academic climates in the schools. I believe these rules ought to be enforced more consistently, attendance policies ought to be strengthened, and teachers ought to assign and check nightly homework.

In addition, it appears that the Evangelistic outreach at Ecom had a positive effect on the academic engagement of grade 9 students there. At the end of the 1996 year, that class placed 10 students in national high school and another 20 got offers for other tertiary training. This was a striking increase over the total of three students who

received offers in 1994.[2] It is possible that students found strong moral guidance in the messages of the outreach, which enabled many of them to adopt a more disciplined attitude towards their schooling and even resolve their identity dilemmas in favor of school success.

Similarly, I recommend that the schools need to attend more to students' inner struggles in high schools and, as emphasized in Chapter 7, the subjective processes by which they determine what "goods" are worth pursuing in life. One Ecom grade 10 boy talked about how he lamented the lack of guidance he had received during his first two years in school:

> Us here in school, when we are in grade 7 and 8, we don't realize what we are doing. But, when we come up to grade 10, we realize it is too late (Fieldnotes 8/1/95).

This quote suggests that schools need to do more to make students aware of their "cultural predicament" (Mehan et al 1994) - in particular, schools need to help students develop a critical consciousness in which they are aware of the internal and external forces which are shaping their life chances (and possible selves).

Guidance Programs. Much of this support could be done in expanded guidance programs. Virtually all students interviewed in this study reported that they were too shy to ask personal questions in their guidance classes - mainly because the classes in both high schools were taught by the headmasters and also because they were afraid of appearing too ambitious in front of their peers. Students would likely benefit from

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[2] 1995 examination results were unavailable at the time of writing.

frequent, scheduled, individualized counseling sessions with a special school guidance teacher from the time they matriculate in grade 7.

Small Learning Groups. Smaller learning groups could address the shyness of many students to speak English in front of their entire class. Groups of 3-5 students would provide a less intimidating audience, and a more comfortable atmosphere for learning from classmates. Various cooperative learning techniques of this type have met with success in other cultures (Slavin 1983).

Constructivist Pedagogy and Reinforcing Students' Cultural Identities. A secondary inspector in Manus referred to the reinforcement of students' cultural (by which he meant "village") identities as "setting the foundation" for success in school. This process would involve attempts to establish connections between the village and the classroom. This might include constructivist techniques (using students' prior knowledge as a point of entry into a subject), as these were seen to be effective in Chapter 5. This might also involve including and validating more "traditional" knowledge and skills in the high school (such as fishing, gardening, and other subsistence technologies), and drawing on research which recognizes the role of "traditional" cultural knowledge in the curriculum (see Kari 1995).

## Insights into Processes of Reproduction and Resistance

The great cultural distance between students' home and school worlds in Papua New Guinea throws many of the issues involved in reproduction and resistance theory into sharp relief - particularly the ways in which students' academic engagement and identities are shaped in relation to structural forces present and local historically-grounded and morally- imbued cultural resources.

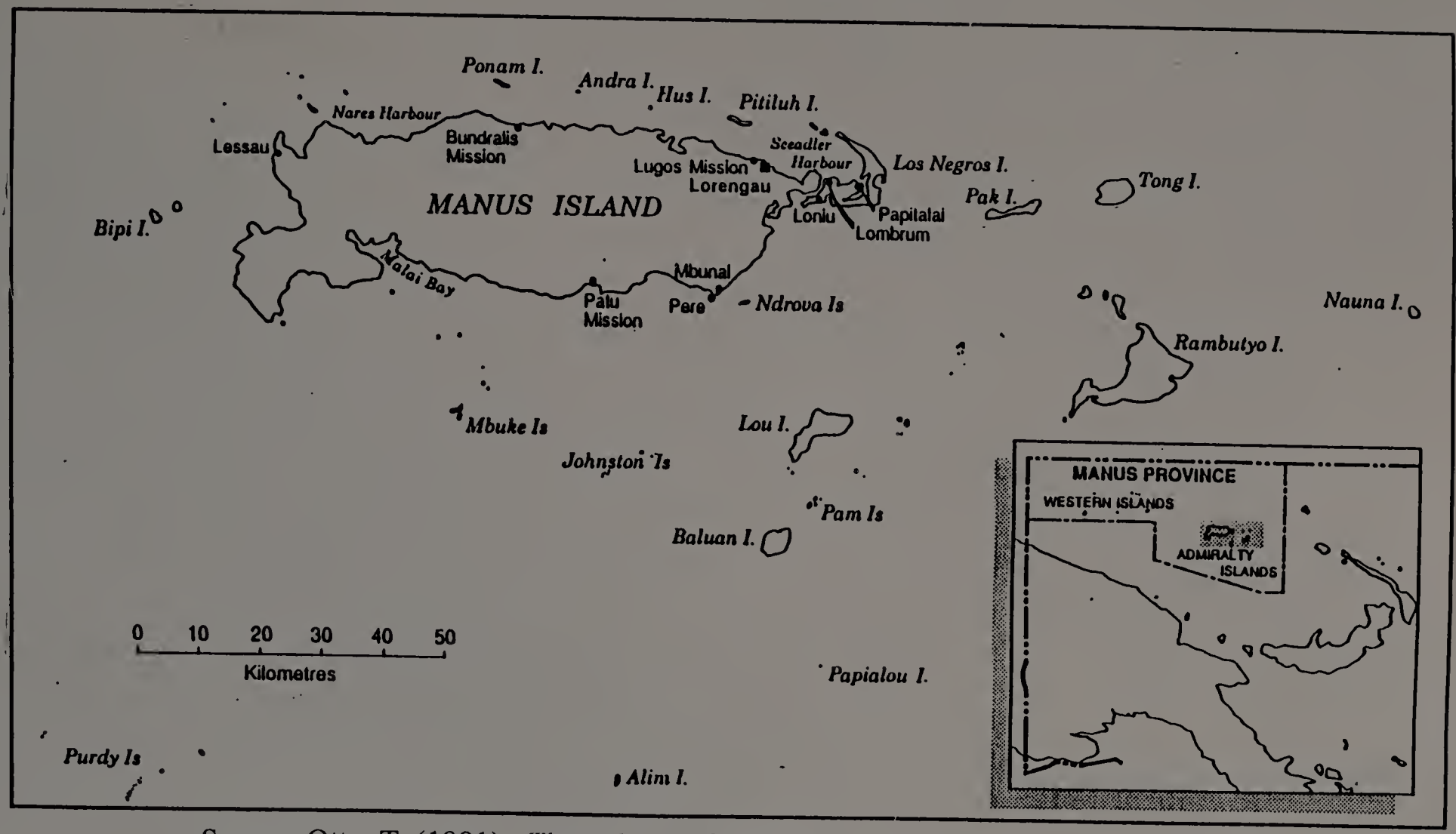
The findings reported here are similar to those of Willis (1977) in England as mentioned in Chapter 3. Like Willis' "lads," many Manus high school students believed that their chances of getting a job through academic success were so slim that it was not worth sacrificing a good time for appropriate behavior in school. As I argued in Chapter 6, this response could be attributed to a developing personal subjectivity - an orientation which may have been implicit in the Western selves of Willis' lads. This subjectivity led Manus youth to ascribe authority to their perceptions of a limited opportunity structure after grade 10 and to pursue social experiences over academic success.

These conclusions certainly resonate with Giroux's (1983) assertion, also discussed in Chapter 3, that student resistance must be seen as rooted in political and (especially) moral indignation. As such, one of the most startling findings of this research was how the anti-academic culture produced by students included an emic social critique of the implications of educational and occupational success for the identity of contemporary Papua New Guineans. Student's labels of "extra," "expensive," "fancy," and "greedy" were aimed directly at the social behaviors which capitalist institutions transformed into "capital" and were thereby implicated in the creation of

hierarchical social relations (and, more individualistic identities). Students used their own cultural resources, especially their own construction of Melanesian egalitarianism, to resist these processes which they felt would rupture the same social fabric in which they were grounding their own identities. In this sense, the anti-academic student culture produced in these Manus high schools must be seen as a stark and creative response to the ongoing penetration of capitalist relations on the periphery of the world system.

# APPENDIX A

## MAPS OF MANUS PROVINCE




Source: Otto, T. (1991). *The politics of tradition in Baluan: Social change and the construction of the past in a Manus society.* Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, The Australian National University, Canberra.

# Manus Province Language Map

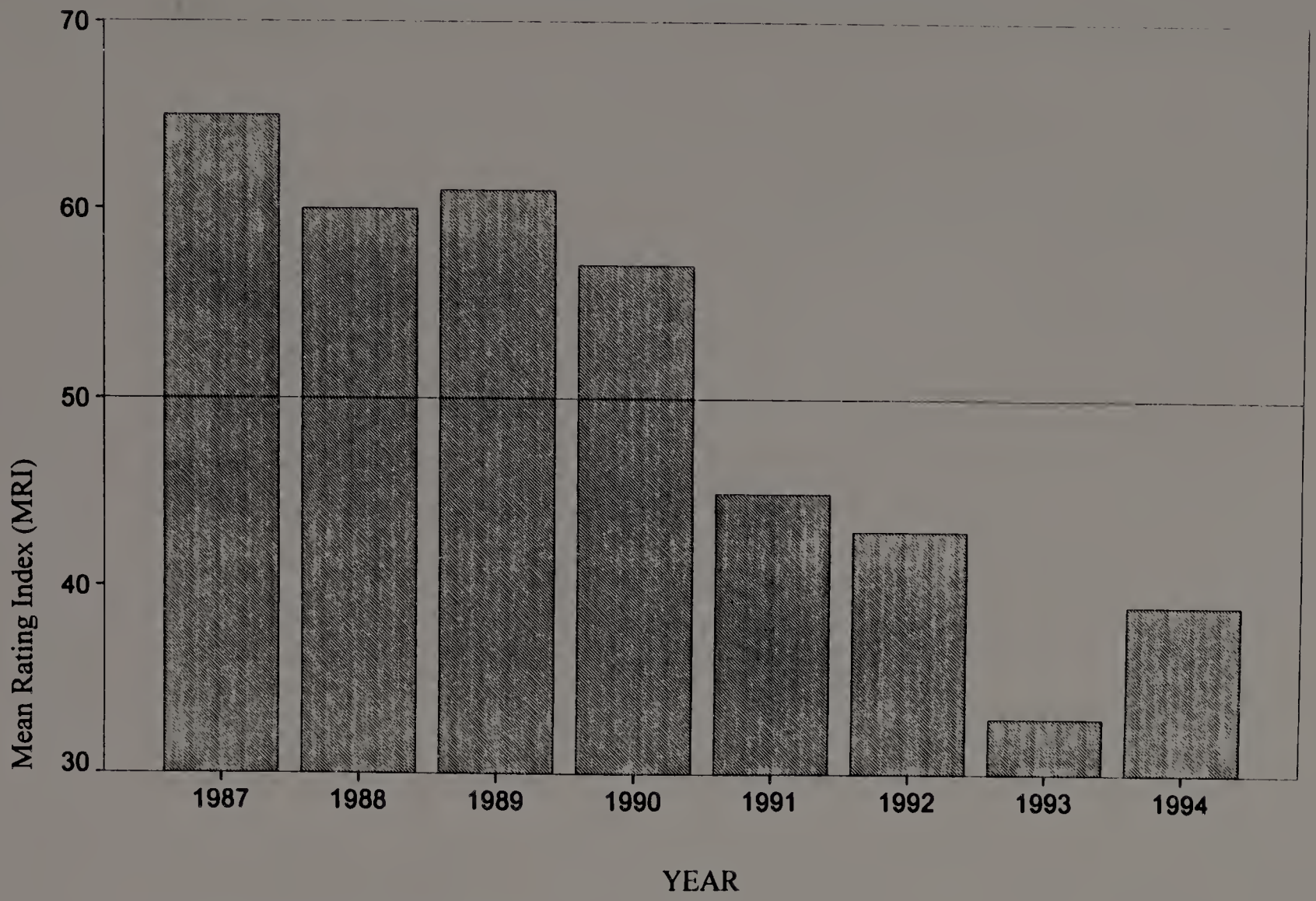

## Manus Languages and Population Data (1980 Census Total = 27,126)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Andra-Hus 986 | 6. Kele 894 | 11. Lele 1865 | 16. Mokerang 228 | 21. Pak-Tong 659 | 26. Seimat 688 |
| 2. Bipi 1068 | 7. Koro 400 | 12. Lenkau 240 | 17. Mondropolon 301 | 22. Pam-Baluan 1522 | 27. Sori-Harengan 619 |
| 3. Elu 216 | 8. Khehek 971 | 13. Loniu 489 | 18. Nali 986 | 23. Papitalai 274 | 28. Titan 3654 |
| 4. Ere 1030 | 9. Kurti 2409 | 14. Lou 902 | 19. Nauna 207 | 24. Penchal 517 | 29. Tulu-Bohuai 1000 |
| 5. Hermit < 50 | 10. Leipon 832 | 15. Malai 100 | 20. Nyindrou 2552 | 25. Ponam 479 | 30. Wuvulu-Aua 988 |

Source: Sylvia Ohnemus

# APPENDIX B

## DECLINE IN MANUS MRI, 1987-1994




Reference line indicates National average.

# APPENDIX C

## SURVEY INSTRUMENTS EMPLOYED IN THE STUDY

### PERE VILLAGE CENSUS AND FIRST JOINT SURVEY

Date: Interviewer:
Clan: Type of house:
Household no.: Person(s) spoken with:

**-Census Update-**

1) How many people live in this house all the time?

2) What are their names?

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3) Have any babies been born here in the last two years?

| a) Name/s: | b) Birthdate: | c) Birth wt |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |

4) Where is/are _____?

**-Occupation-**

5) What do all the adults in the house do during the day? (fish, earn a wage, make sago, gather food) Where?

6) Does anyone in the house sell anything for money? Or own a tradestore? What do they sell?

7) Do any of your children have jobs? What do they do? Where do they work?

**-Education-**

8) Who in the house has attended school, and is not immediately planning to continue with it? What was the last grade in school they completed?

| Who completed: | Last grade completed: |
|---|---|
| | |

---------- ----------

9) Who in the house has been in school this year? What school did they go to? Are they going next year?

| In school(who): | Where? | Next year(y/n)? |
|---|---|---|
| ---------- | ---------- | ---------- |
| ---------- | ---------- | ---------- |
| ---------- | ---------- | ---------- |

**-Household Resources-**

10) We also want to know if anyone in the house owns these things? And, whether it works right now.

| | Owned (y/n) | Works (y/n) |
|---|---|---|
| Speedboat | | |
| Canoe | | |
| Sailing | | |
| Poling | | |
| Outboard motor | | |
| Generator | | |
| Refrigerator | | |
| Radio | | |
| Cassette player | | |
| Books | | |
| Pens and paper | | |
| Primus stove | | |
| Lamp | | |

**-Religious Affiliation-**

11) Do people in the house go to church? Where do they go?

| Go to church (y/n): | Where: |
|---|---|

**-Food and Health-**

12) Has anyone been sick recently? Who? What kind of sickness? Haus sik?

| Who sick? | When? | What kind? | What was done? |
|---|---|---|---|

13) When did you last go to the market for food? What market?

14) What did you buy when you were last at the market?

15) Food Frequency Questionnaire (Household level)
Did your family eat these foods yesterday?

| Item: | Consumed(Y/N)?: | Notes: |
|---|---|---|
| Saksak | | |
| Recipe | | |
| Tinned fish | | |
| Kaukau or yam | | |
| Taro | | |
| Tapioc | | |
| Aibika/greens | | |
| Milo | | |
| Tea | | |
| Soda | | |
| Milk | | |
| Paupau | | |
| Pineap | | |
| Mouli | | |
| Coconut | | |
| Bananas | | |
| Krupis or kuka | | |
| Fresh fish | | |
| Smoked fish | | |
| Tinned fish | | |
| Turtle | | |
| Other seafood | | |
| Tinned meat | | |
| Oil | | |
| Biscuits | | |
| Sugar | | |
| Salt | | |
| Scones | | |
| Bread | | |

## MANUS STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: Class: M / F Community School:

1) Your five best friends: Relative? School? Class?
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.

2) Does your papa, mama, or any of your brothers or sisters have a job (wokmani) now? Y / N
   How many of them have jobs?

3) How much money did your parents and/or relatives give you when you came back to school from the term 2 holiday?

4) Are you shy to speak English in front of other students in class? Y / N

5) What do you think are the four most important subjects in school for your own future?
   1. 3.
   2. 4.

6) Do you think it is hard to be a good student at your high school? Y / N
   Why?

7) What kind of work do you want to do in your future life?

8) If you do not get an offer after grade 10, what will you do? (circle one)
   a. Go back to the village and work there
   b. Try to self-sponsor for further education
   c. Try to find work in town
   d. Metere (Go around)
   e. Criminal activities
   f. Other:

9) Do you think some students in your school are not very busy with their schooling? Y / N
   Why?

10) A boy who has finished school is given a good job in Moresby. But his old mother does not want him to go. She says, "I am an old woman now, you had better stay here to look after me." What does he do? What do you think?

11) Circle your five favorite foods and drinks from the list below:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Greens | Rice | Kakaruk | Coke/Pepsi | Scones |
| Fruits | Kaukau | Tinned Fish | Kulau | Biskits |
| Coconuts | Taro | Fresh Fish | Kordial | Pinats |
| Ice Cream | Sago | Ox & Palm | Tea | Chips |

12) When your family has a kastomwok, what foods are usually made?

13) How many traditional medicines can you think of? (List them and what sickness they can help)

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